

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)

# 5 QUESTIONS

Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam

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Morality

**15** Islamic Law  
in Western  
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World Religions'  
Perspectives

# The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 195 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>as</sup> proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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The *Muslim Sunrise* is published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA, 15000 Good Hope Road, Silver Spring, MD 20905, Phone 301.879.0110, Fax 301.879.0115, under the auspices of Dr. Ahsanullah Zafar, Ameer and National President. The views and opinions expressed by individual contributors in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA.

The *Muslim Sunrise* welcomes letters to the editor, questions and submissions. Email us at [MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us](mailto:MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us) or go online to [www.MuslimSunrise.com](http://www.MuslimSunrise.com).

Library of Congress Call Number BP195.A5 M8

Mailing Address: The Muslim Sunrise, 2 S 510 Route 53, Glen Ellyn, IL 60137, Phone: (630) 790-4100, ext. 206, Fax: (630) 793-4100.

Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

**[www.muslimsunrise.com](http://www.muslimsunrise.com)**



AHMADIYYA  
MUSLIM COMMUNITY  
*United States of America*

*Muslims who believe in the Messiah,  
Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Qadiani<sup>AS</sup>*



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For More Information on  
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## From the Holy Qur'an

Chapter 4, Surah Al-Nisa, 4:37-38

وَاعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا  
وَبِالِّوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَى  
وَالْيَتَامَى وَالْمَسِكِينَ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَى  
وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْبِ  
وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ط  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ۖ<sup>٣٧</sup>

الَّذِينَ يَبْخَلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْمُبْخَلِ  
وَيَكُنُّ مُتَّمُونَ مَا أَتَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ط  
وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكُفَّارِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ۖ<sup>٣٨</sup>

[4:37] And worship Allah and associate naught with Him, and show kindness to parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbor that is a kinsman and the neighbor that is a stranger, and the companion by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom your right hands possess. Surely, Allah loves not the proud and the boastful,

[4:38] Who are niggardly and enjoin people to be niggardly, and conceal that which Allah has given them of His bounty. And We have prepared for the disbelievers an humiliating punishment,

# In the Words of the Promised Messiah

**I**t is no secret that before he is forty a man's life is mostly obscured by ignorance. The first seven or eight years of his existence are passed in infancy, and the following twenty-five or so years are mostly spent in the pursuit of learning or frittered away on libertine pleasures.

Afterwards, he is married or is otherwise beguiled into chasing wealth and honor and exceeds all bounds in doing so. At this stage, even if man turns towards God his quest is somewhat tainted with material desires. His prayers are mostly for worldly gains and his cries and supplications are sullied by worldly desires. Thus, what little faith he has in the hereafter is offset by the fact that death appears only as a distant possibility.

Just as when a dam bursts its banks and destroys whatever lies in its path, so does the flood of carnal passions imperil human life. In this state, how can he ever believe in the subtleties of the hereafter? Instead, he mocks and derides religion and parades his own dry logic and sophistry. Of course, if he is good by nature, he may believe in God, but does so without full faith and sincerity and that too is conditional upon his own success.

If his desires are fulfilled he turns to God, if not, he turns to Satan. In short, youth is a critical period of one's life and without Divine grace one might well land in the pit of hell. The fact is that this part of one's life is the root of all evil. It is at this time that one contracts most physical ailments and some unforgettable diseases. The mistakes made in the callowness of youth often cause man to turn away from the True and Immutable God. Thus, at this age he fears God but little and is driven by carnal passion and dominated by his baser self. He pays little heed to the advice of others and suffers the consequences of this age for the remainder of his life.

As man approaches forty, he starts



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

shedding the vagaries of his youth and ruefully looks back at many of his follies from which his counselors had failed to dissuade him. The ebullience of his youth naturally begins to subside, for his physical condition declines with advancing age. The rebellious blood is no longer there, nor is there any more physical vitality and recklessness of youth. The time of deterioration and decay approaches fast.

At this stage, he also witnesses the passing away of his elders and even the untimely death of younger people whose loss leaves him stricken with grief. His parents too are probably no more and the world begins to betray its transience in a number of ways. It is as if God places before him a mirror and says, 'Look, this is the reality of life of which you are so fond.' It is then that he recalls his past mistakes with regret and undergoes a radical transformation ushering in a new life, provided he is well-meaning by nature and is one of those whom God has summoned. It is in this context that Allah, the Almighty, says:

**"And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother bears him**

**with pain, and brings him forth with pain. And the bearing of him and his weaning takes thirty months, till, when he attains his full maturity and reaches the age of forty years, he says, 'My Lord, grant me the power that I may be grateful for Your favour which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may do such good works as may please You. And make my seed righteous for me. I do turn to You; and, truly, I am of those who submit to You.'** (Surah al-Ahqaf 46:16)

That is, we enjoined on man [saying to him:] "Be good to your parents. You should realize what agony your mother suffered for you! During your pregnancy she suffered pain for a long period of time and with pain she brought you forth. For thirty months she remained in discomfort during gestation and breastfeeding you. Again, He says that when a good person reaches forty and matures he recalls Divine exhortations and says, 'My Lord, let me be grateful for the favors You have bestowed on me and on my parents and grant me the opportunity to do such good works as may please You, and make my seed righteous for me. That is to say, if I failed in my duty to my parents, let not my children do the same. If ever I strayed from the right path, let them not follow suit. My Lord, I repent and turn to You and am of those who submit.'

Thus, God has made it clear that the fortieth year is a blessing for those who are righteous and it is then that the spirit of truth awakens in them. Most of God's Prophets were raised in the fortieth year of their lives. For instance, our Lord and Master, the Holy Prophet<sup>saw</sup> was also raised for the reformation of mankind in his fortieth year.

*"Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam (page 46-49) for full text go to [alislam.org](http://alislam.org)*

# Editorial

**T**he Conference of Great Religions was held in 1896 in India to search for the answers to questions that have plagued the human mind since the inception of religion. Scholars from various faith traditions including Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism were invited to this conference to shed light from their unique religious perspectives. The organizing committee requested that all speakers confine their answers to their respective faiths' holy books.

## The five questions were:

- What are the physical, moral and spiritual states of man?
- What is the state of man after death, i.e., the hereafter?
- What is the true purpose of man's existence on earth and how can it be achieved?
- What are the effects of one's deeds in this life and the afterlife?
- What are the sources of divine knowledge?

Over the centuries, many prophets, religious scholars and philosophers have tackled these questions and have tried to provide explanations from various sources. The sources they used were from their personal revelations, religious books or knowledge inherited from sages.

In this conference, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>, offered comprehensive answers to all these questions. The presentation was later published in book form under the title "Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam."

Aside from the fact that it was unanimously recognized at the conference as the best presentation, there was another unique aspect that needs to be pointed out. Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>as</sup> stated that whatever arguments he presented in response to each question would exclusively be from the Holy Qur'an. He would not use his own logic or arguments and would restrict himself to what the Holy Qur'an has offered on these subjects. He went even further and did not even quote anything from the sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, *Ahadith*, which is a great source of knowledge in explaining the Holy Qur'an. He took great pains to ensure that the knowledge and arguments presented were exclusively and,

without exception, directly taken from the Holy Qur'an.

This is a great tribute to the Holy Qur'an that all these areas that have baffled the human mind for millenia have been discussed and clarified by it for the complete guidance and understanding of humankind. In the view of Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>as</sup>, this by itself is the greatest proof of the Holy Qur'an being the book of knowledge given to Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> from God, the All Knowing, the All Wise.

We have selected a few of these questions, particularly the ones relating to the issue of morality, and our writers have based their articles on the arguments and knowledge presented by Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>as</sup> in the essay mentioned above.

**We could not possibly** cover all the questions discussed in his essay but request the readers to go to the website [Alislam.org](http://Alislam.org) and read the book "Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam" in its entirety. It will open new doors of knowledge and understanding which have been bestowed upon us from the Almighty God through the Holy Qur'an.

# Persecution and Our Relationship With Allah

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011

**S**ummarising the persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan, Hudhrat said the oppression started when the legislative body of the country, the National Assembly, passed a bill and declared us non-Muslims in 1974. Later, taking full advantage of his dictatorship, Gen. Zia made the law even harsher. Considered as insignificant, we had been declared non-Muslims, were not allowed to say the Kalima, were stopped from saying Assalamoalaikum and were not allowed to do anything that would even hint that we were Muslims. Yet, we did not desist and continued to practice as true Muslims, therefore, he legalised for us to be imprisoned for these practices or in disobedience of his Ordinance, if we associated with the Seal of all the Prophets (peace and blessings of Allah be on him), he decreed death penalty for us. How dared we, in spite of being so few in numbers, injure the religious sentiments of the majority by calling ourselves Muslims?



***The Persecution of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community*** continues worldwide. In Pakistan, Blasphemy Laws are being used specially against Ahmadis to harass them. Millions of religious minority are under threat to be falsely implicated in any such case on the basis of personal enmity with a punishment from three years to death.

### Summary of Friday Sermon

Delivered November 11, 2011 by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad <sup>at</sup>, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, who is affectionately referred to as Hudhrat.

Hudhrat said this is nothing new. Thus has been the treatment of Pharaoh-like individuals in each age to people of God. The episode of Pharaoh-like oppressors continues to this day. The Qur'an records Pharaoh saying: '**These are a small party, And they have offended us.**' (26: 55 – 56)

When Ahmadis experience opposition, it only strengthens our faith given that the history of Prophets of God is being repeated. Without doubt we are few in number and are insignificant in the eyes of the world. They are not offended by us because we are committing a sin or a crime or indeed any kind of extremism. Their offence is borne out of our love and loyalty to God

and His Messenger, our peaceable approach out of love for our homeland because we do not trample upon the rights of God's creatures and do not become part of the extremism that has made barbarism run rampant in the country [Pakistan]. Our response is that we are the followers of that Messiah who has taught us principles of peace and conciliation in continuation of the Sunnah of his master, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him). By practicing these values after coming into the Bai'at of the Messiah<sup>as</sup> we are in fact trying to fulfil the dues of following the Holy Prophet<sup>saw</sup>. The courage and valour and the passion to look death in the eye is given to us by the champion of God who was sent by God in this age to establish the second phase of Islam. It is given to us by the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet<sup>saw</sup> who brought faith back down to earth from the Pleiades. We are thus ready for every kind of sacrifice with the insight

that we are the followers of that Imam who was told by God: ‘The Messenger of God in the mantle of the Prophets.’ [Tadhkirah, p. 110]

The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> writes in Brahim-e-Ahmadiyya:

‘This revelation means that I have been bestowed a portion of the particular circumstances or attributes of all the Prophets from Adam onwards—may peace be on them—who have come into the world from God Almighty, whether they are from among the Israelites or

lations that the Community is experiencing, especially in Pakistan and also in Indonesia, Malaysia and some other Muslim countries, God is giving us glad-tidings. Had ours been a worldly community, it would have been forced to bend its knees before these oppressors or at least adopt hypocrisy. However, with the grace of God, not only is the Ahmadiyya Community facing up to the persecution, rather in spite of all the dire situations, it is progressing. This alone would

be sufficient proof for a fair-minded person of its truthfulness. God states in the Qur'an: ‘Have they not travelled in the earth and seen what was the end of those before them? They were far more powerful than these and stronger in the marks they left in the earth. But Allah seized them for their sins, and they

had no protector against Allah.

**That was because their Messengers came to them with manifest Signs, but they disbelieved; so Allah seized them. Surely He is Powerful, Severe in punishment.’ (40: 22–23)**

Hudhur said all the revelations of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> that Hudhur has cited were not personal claims of his, rather, these were words revealed to him by God, Who was with him. It is a serious issue to associate/asccribe something to God and He certainly does not forgive one who wrongly ascribes something to him. As we see the signs of Divine help and support with the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>, it further strengthens our belief that just as God was with him in his lifetime and helped him, God will do so in the future. Indeed, He is helping us today. As the aforementioned verse shows, God gives the opponents of Prophets and persecutors of Divine communities leeway for a while, but when His chastisement comes, no power on earth can be of any avail.

Those who presume Ahmadis to be given a beggar's bowl, or those who, God forbid, call Ahmadiyyat a cancer have little power. The earlier tyrants, of whom the Qur'an cites examples, were much more powerful. The oppressors of today do not even have their own wealth and are forever bowing to foreign powers to run their country.

It is cause for concern for the leaders as well as the public who unconsciously condone oppression. Today there is no official pro forma or document in Pakistan for obtaining anything at all, to go through any officialdom that does not contain offensiveness about the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>, one has to sign these forms/documents and declare oneself to be a Muslim. Huge, offensive posters are placed in shopping areas, offices and parks and thus all those involved are guilty of a huge sin. Even those who are quietly condoning it all are also unconsciously perpetrating sin or perhaps decency has ceased to exist or perhaps there is no belief in God.

By filing wrongful lawsuits against Ahmadis, people are committing something which is certainly not liked by God. Indeed, God states “be fair and do not oppress those who have oppressed you.” God states “falsehood is shirk (associating partners with God)” and He will not forget this sin. Yet, what are these people doing that we observe every day? Recently an Ahmadi was dragged into a false law case of murder. When the perpetrators were told that this was wrong, they agreed that the Ahmadi was innocent. They added that they had filed the case against him because he was an Ahmadi. If he renounced Ahmadiyyat and was abusive about the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>, not only would they drop the case, they would help him get released and would fete him with garlands. Hudhur added, yet these are the people who are confirmed Muslims and Ahmadis are non-Muslims.

Addressing our detractors, Hudhur said ‘O opponents of Ahmadiyyat, fear God for Whom your wealth, your conceit and arrogance, your Imamat of mosques, your political parties, your governmental power, your majority in numbers has no significance. In response to all your oppressions, our answer is the same which the Holy Qur'an states in the verses: ‘...Surely He is Powerful, Severe in punishment.’ Hudhur said the persecution has now spread to innocent Ahmadi school children who are told that they cannot stay in their schools because they are disbelievers. The only option given to them is to be abusive about the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>. If a school headmaster or the owner of a private school shows some decency, he is told that if Ahmadi children attend a school, they will not send their children and would have the school closed. Decent people who do not listen to the mullah and the troublemakers are warned about ‘consequences’. Due to their incompetence the authorities are in the clutch of the

***God is going to grant triumph to the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> as it is stated in the Qur'an: ‘Allah has decreed: ‘Most surely I will prevail, I and My Messengers.’ Verily, Allah is Powerful, Mighty.’ (58:22)***

otherwise. There has not been a single Prophet of whose characteristics or circumstances I have not partaken to a degree. My nature bears the imprint of the nature of every Prophet. This is what God has told me...’ [Essence of Islam, Vol. IV, p. 81]

Hudhur explained that partaking some of the circumstances of the other Prophets also entails facing opposition. However, this opposition or legislation cannot harm our Community in any way at all because God has also informed of the triumphs and of the successes that were granted to the other Prophets. God thus revealed to the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>: ‘Good tidings to you, O My Ahmad’ [Tadhkirah, p. 466] The hostile legislation, the oppression, persecution cannot stop the success of the Community of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>. He was informed by God that ultimately the doors of triumph will be flung open. In another place in his book ‘Asmani Faisala’, (The Heavenly Decree) he writes:

‘Allah has addressed me in these clear words: Meaning that, “I am the One Who grants victory—I shall give you victory. A wondrous aid will you behold. The disbelievers, i.e., those of them in whose fate lies guidance, will fall in prostration saying, ‘Forgive us our sins, we were in error.’ [The Heavenly Decree, p. 59]

A revelation of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> is: ‘Yours is the victory and you will triumph.’ [Tadhkirah, p. 606]. Hudhur explained that in the backdrop of all the adversities and hostile legis-



***Hudhur said in spite of all the persecution, Ahmadis should make practical efforts to help, borne out of sympathy, but more than anything Ahmadis should pray. When no one wants to know us we should help with prayers, implore God for the reformation of the Ummah.***

mullah and the extremists. Be it the mullah, or an opportunist politician or any governmental worker; whosoever is involved in this persecution should remember that God is '**Severe in punishment**'. This is not a tale of ancient people; rather this is a Sign of a Living God.

Those who oppose the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> and exceed all limits in their opposition, should remember that by rejecting the truth which the Holy Prophet<sup>saw</sup> foretold and which is in the Qur'an, they are joining those who have a bad ending. Besides, what sin are they not committing as well as persecuting Ahmadis? The country is embroiled in all sorts of iniquity; bribery, filth, moral ills, thieving, robbery, murder and mayhem. Is all this not incurring the wrath of God? Hudhur said, 'think a little, O, negligent! It is our prayer that God saves the country.' Adding, Hudhur said in spite of all the persecution, Ahmadis should make practical efforts to help, borne out of sympathy, but more than anything Ahmadis should pray. When no one wants to know us we should help with prayers, implore God for the reformation of the Ummah.

God is going to grant triumph to the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> as it is stated in the Qur'an: '**Allah has decreed: 'Most surely I will prevail, I and My Messengers.'** **Verily, Allah is Powerful, Mighty.**' (58:22) In explanation, Hudhur said the decree of triumph is from God and the reasoning given for it is the Power

and Might of God. In this is a lesson for a believer and a non-believer both, to reflect. A believer should try and strengthen his or her belief as well as try to take his or her connection with God to its pinnacle so that he or she becomes a part of the promised triumph. For the opposite side, therein is a challenge that they may try and use all their power, but God is Powerful and Mighty and He has decreed to grant triumph to His dear ones. Hence, all the scheming of the opponents, harassment of school children, harassment of Ahmadi employees or business fraternity, filing lawsuits against completely unconnected and innocent Ahmadis will not stop the triumph. If it was a man-made affair, no doubt their power would have worked, but when God has decreed: '**...Verily, Allah is Powerful, Mighty**', then dearth of worldly means of the Ahmadis is of no significance. Did the lack of apparatus in any of the battles fought by the Holy Prophet<sup>saw</sup> or any other battle [of Prophets] affect the outcome of the war? Indeed, in spite of God's assurance, Prophets of God make ordinary arrangement according to their resources, but their stress is on prayers. The most perfect example of this was demonstrated by our master, the Holy Prophet<sup>saw</sup>. The battle of Badr presents a great model of this when the Prophet<sup>saw</sup>, in spite of all Divine assurances, prayed in an anxious and tender manner, as if in the throes of death. When

God decrees that He and His Messengers will prevail, His Messengers also absorb themselves completely in God and try to become a part of the Divine ruling. The power of the holiness of the Holy Prophet<sup>saw</sup> generated those Companions who during the time of battle, fought during the day and spent the nights in worship of God. By worldly standards the Muslims had no comparability with the enemy in any of the battles but the power of prayers granted them success. During battle, they did not overlook the obligatory Salat. At one juncture, due to the onslaughts of the enemy, the Muslims were not able to offer their Salat during battle and the five Prayers were combined. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) was deeply saddened by this and said, 'damn you, may the enemy be destroyed due to whom we had to combine our five Prayers.' Hudhur explained that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) only cursed because he was not given the opportunity to offer Salat on time although he was constantly engaged in silent remembrance of God. Doubtless, God has promised triumph, yet in order to attract His grace it is most important to be attentive towards worship. Without this, a community cannot claim to be a Prophet's community. Prophets of God come to this world to connect man with God, thus if a community does not practice this fundamental principle, how can it be part of the promised triumph?

In his book 'Kitab ul-Bariyyah' the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) wrote that God is Most Powerful and Mighty and one who turns to Him with sincerity is never wasted. The enemy assumes to destroy with his ploys and has evil intent but does he assume to contend with God? Those who hatch evil plans are extremely foolish for at the time of making their wicked schemes they do not remember that Being without Whose command even a leaf cannot fall. Evil cannot harm the righteous. Rather, God's Signs are manifested and people increase in spiritual knowledge. Although the Powerful God cannot be seen from the naked eye, He manifests Himself through His great Signs.

Hudhur said if we continue to turn to All Powerful God with love and sincerity, none of the enemy's ploys can harm our Community. This is why Hudhur had recently especially asked for prayer, worship and optional fasting. The enemy is trying with all his might to attack us and our most effective source is prayer. While the now international scale of

# **Addressing our detractors, Hudhur said ‘O opponents of Ahmadiyyat, fear God for Whom your wealth, your conceit and arrogance, your Imamat of mosques, your political parties, your governmental power, your majority in numbers has no significance. In response to all your oppressions, our answer is the same which the Holy Qur'an states in the verses: ‘...Surely He Is Powerful, Severe In punishment.’**

enmity against us is an indication that God will manifest His glory more than ever, the world of Ahmadiyyat should be attentive that we will hold our worship most dear and will greatly enhance our connection with God. May God enable us of all to do so.

Hudhur said he wished to mention a revelation of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> that includes the words, ‘After eleven.’ Hudhur said Ahmadiyyat make personal inferences [about revelations] and also write to Hudhur about them. About this specific revelation, the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> said: ‘I do not know whether by eleven is meant eleven days or eleven weeks or eleven months or eleven years. In any case a sign in proof of my innocence will appear within that period’. Hudhur said today is the eleventh day of the eleventh month in the year 2011, and Ahmadiyyat have made inferences according to their thoughts. Hudhur said if anything is destined to happen today, it will definitely come to pass, InshaAllah, but it should be remembered that there are many revelations in which there is promise of the manifestation of God’s help and succour and quality of Rahmaniyyat and the promise is for it to happen unexpectedly. It is not implausible that from today’s date, this month and this year, the destiny starts taking shape. However, sometimes, having made personal inference, some weak-natured people lose hope or become disinclined to faith if the outcome is not according to their conjecture. Hudhur said this is not the way of a believer. Our triumph is destined to take place and will most certainly come to pass, in fact, it is happening. The senselessness of our opponents is a proof of this.

Hudhur said he also wanted to relate that as regards this revelation, Hadhrat Musleh Maud<sup>ra</sup> has written about the difficult deci-

sion of migration from Qadian. He wrote:

‘A study of the revelations vouchsafed to the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> convinced me that our migration from Qadian had been indicated with certainty and I decided to leave Qadian, a message was sent to Lahore by telephone that some transport might be arranged for, but no reply was received for eight or ten days and finally the reply that came was that Government was not able to arrange for any transport. At that time also I was studying the revelations vouchsafed to the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> and I found one revelation: After eleven. It passed through my mind that possibly it meant that transport would be arranged after the lunar date eleven. But days passed and the solar date 28 arrived and yet no transportation became available. I was pondering what was the meaning of the phrase: After eleven; in the revelation of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>, when I received a message from Mirza Bashir Ahmad that Major Bashir Ahmad, brother of Major-General Nazir Ahmad was coming to see me. This was a mistake. It was not Major Bashir Ahmad, but his brother Captain Ataullah. I described the situation to him and asked him whether he could make some arrangement for transportation and security. He told me that he would make some arrangement the same day on his return to Lahore. Accordingly, he procured the car of Nawab Muhammad Din and the jeep of Mirza Mansoor Ahmad and the cars of some other friends and started for Qadian. In the meantime, next day we tried to procure some transportation through an Ahmadi friend who had promised that he would arrive in Qadian between 8 and 9 a.m. with a military escort. He did not arrive till 10 a.m. and then it passed through my mind that the phrase “eleven” in the revelation might mean eleven o’clock and that trans-

portation might become available after 11 a.m. Mirza Bashir Ahmad was in charge of all these arrangements and every few minutes I received his message that all arrangements had fallen through and that no effort had been successful. I telephoned to him that in view of the phrase “after eleven” in the revelation I was thinking that some arrangement would go through after 11 a.m. I had originally thought that the phrase had reference to a date but that I was now thinking that it had reference to the hour. At five minutes past eleven I was about to lift the receiver of the telephone to try to find out from Mirza Nasir Ahmad what the situation was, but before I dialled his number, his call came through that Captain Ataullah had arrived with transportation and we thus travelled from Qadian to Lahore.’ [Tadkirah, p. 481]

**Hudhur said the revelation of ‘After eleven’ was fulfilled in another way when the rule of a [Pakistani] dictator who wished to eliminate Ahmadiyyat was eliminated exactly after eleven years.** Hudhur said prophecies and revelations are fulfilled repeatedly and in diverse ways and we should hope for distinct, bright signs.

The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> was given a revelation in Persian that reads: ‘Your supplications have reached heaven, then be not surprised if I should give you hopeful news. After eleven, if God so wills.’ [Tadkirah, footnote, p. 480] Hudhur said here too the subject is that of prayers. We need to turn to prayers with great intensity and that is why Hudhur drew attention to this matter a few weeks ago. Hudhur urged to make intense prayers, supplications that reach heaven and stir the heavens and we experience triumph. Hudhur said, ‘may God enable me and you to make greater prayers than before.’ ♦

**Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said: A man proceeding along a trail became very thirsty. Arriving at a well descended into it and came out after taking a drink and saw a dog with its tongue lolling out trying to lick up mud from extreme thirst. The man thought this dog is suffering from thirst as I was suffering. So he descended once more into the well, filled his leather sock with water and came up holding it by his teeth and gave the dog a drink. Allah appreciated his action and forgave his sins. The Holy Prophet was asked: Messenger of Allah, are we rewarded for kindness to animals also? He answered: There is a reward for kindness to every living thing.**

**(Bokhari and Muslim)**

# GOOD & EVIL

## What is Morality? By Lubna Roohi Malik

**I**iving in a standard of right behavior," and world of behavior "sanctioned by or drug operative on one's conscience abuse, or ethical judgment."<sup>1</sup> Islam, unwanted through its divinely revealed book, the Holy Qur'an, suggests a different, and more complete, definition: controlled natural behavior that is reflected upon and exhibited at the appropriate time and place.<sup>2</sup> This understanding of morality, as explained in *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* by the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>, explains morality as a dynamic concept that requires thought and appreciation, not merely a black and white line of right or wrong. This brief essay will examine the Islamic understanding of morality that is most applicable to today's society, as well as examples of a few characteristics and behaviors that have the potential to be "moral" if properly controlled in the appropriate circumstances.

## Morality Defined

The Holy Qur'an lays out three basic states of man. These three states separate man from animals and spiritual men from moral men.<sup>3</sup> These three states are: the natural state, the moral state, and the spiritual state. Man begins in the base, natural state, where he has the impulse to eat, drink, sleep, and perform various other natural functions.<sup>4</sup> To move beyond this, man learns social culture and etiquette, which are a slightly refined natural state. To become moral, however, man needs to learn to control the natural qualities, urges, and impulses and exhibit them in the appropriate manner at the appropriate time.<sup>5</sup> God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an in 68:5 that He has endowed all humans with the ability to achieve high moral excellences.<sup>6</sup> Beyond this moral state is the spiritual state, where man perfectly controls his moral qualities so that he is constantly consumed in full devotion to God Almighty.<sup>7</sup>

## Why the World Needs Morality

The Holy Qur'an was revealed to elevate the savage Arabs of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's<sup>sa</sup> time into men. The people of Arabia, during the pre-Islamic period commonly known as the *jahiliyya* or *ignorance*, were steeped in barbarism and lacked any social culture and morality. It was common for men to marry an unlimited number of women at one time, including marrying one's own mother. It was no surprise to see Arabs eating dead animal carcasses, and sometimes engaging in cannibalism. There was minimal belief in the Afterlife, female infanticide was rampant, and orphans were seen as no one's responsibility. Alcohol was consumed like water and society as a whole lacked all modesty, shame, and self-respect. It was to tame these savages into men, and then moral men, and then spiritual men that God Almighty sent the Message of the Holy Qur'an to the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>. Today's society seems to be approaching a similar level of savagery.<sup>8</sup> To control and hinder the increasing immorality and to lead humanity to a better path, the world desperately needs to properly understand morality and practice upon it.

## How to Behave Morally

Understanding that morality is a means bettering our inner natural self and that society as a whole is in need of it, it is imperative to understand how such moral behavior and change is possible. Morality, as explained

above, is controlled natural behaviors. Thus, morality is informed by natural behaviors and habits, so one must first begin by moderating the natural self.<sup>9</sup> A very simple example of such moderation is to learn to not eat too much or too little.

Once such moderation is achieved, it is possible for a person to have moral qualities, such as a humble heart, peaceful nature, and disdain for evil.<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that these types of moral qualities indicate a gentle and moral disposition, but they are not examples of morality.<sup>11</sup> Morality requires more thought, reflection, and care.

Morality begins to take root and develop when the natural state is controlled by reason and understanding of why a particular course of action is moral at the particular time and place. For example, a dog being affectionate is not moral because the dog lacks the ability to reason and understand that it is being morally affectionate at the appropriate time and place; for a dog, being affectionate is simply a natural reaction. Humans, however, have been endowed with the capacity of reflection and giving due regard to the time and occasion of a given situation—acting with this capacity creates the moral state.<sup>12</sup>

When this mental process is at issue as one lives life, morality causes one to differentiate between more than just right and wrong, but between varying levels of right and wrong. Such a moral person views things as highly right and barely right, and horribly wrong and minimally wrong. Such a person feels self-conscious and guilty when doing something wrong or when missing an opportunity to do good. This self-consciousness is derived from the knowledge and active belief God exists, that God has created a purpose for all life, that there will be an Afterlife, and that each person will be accounted for how well he lived up to his purpose. Understanding one's existence in this manner leads one to desire to be moral.<sup>13</sup>

The Arabic word for "moral" is *khulq*. *Khulq* literally means spiritual birth. Through moral development, also known as controlling the natural impulses, one finds a spiritual birth. Such morals that lead to spiritual birth are not simply being meek, courteous, or humble, but by reflecting on the accompanying inner feeling with each action. For example, when a person sheds tears, the inner moral quality of tenderness

can be awakened, but only when such tender tears are shed at the proper time and place. Similarly, acting violently in defense of oneself at the appropriate time and place is morally termed bravery. Punishment is another example of an act that can be done in a despotic manner, or if done at the proper time and place, it can be retribution in the form of punishing a wrongdoer and become a moral quality. The list continues with benevolence, courage, justice, mercy, bountifulness, chastity, piety, equity, sympathy, generosity, forbearance, endurance, sincerity—all of these qualities have the potential to be empty social etiquette or to become moral if they are practiced in a thoughtful manner at the appropriate time and place.<sup>14</sup>

## The Three Kinds of Morality

There are three types of morality: elementary morality, negative morality, and positive morality. Elementary morality is that morality which structures society according to appropriate norms. Negative morality, or anti-evil morality, is that morality which hinders one from committing immoral acts. Positive morality, or pro-goodness morality, is that morality which encourages and enables one to do good.<sup>15</sup>

## Elementary Morality

The Holy Qur'an contains many instructions regarding elementary morality, such as who one may and may not marry, who one may and may not inherit from, not doing things in secret, not killing one's children, not entering empty houses, entering houses through doors, not drinking, not gambling, and not eating dead animals. The Holy Qur'an also instructs the lower moral qualities of keeping one's house and self clean, speaking and walking moderately, bathing after consorting with one's spouse, feeding animals, and caring for orphans. All of these instructions are examples of living with a very basic level of morality that maintains a proper moral balance in society.<sup>16</sup>

## Negative Morality

Negative morality, or anti-evil morality that encourages discarding evil is best seen in the Holy Qur'an through the four moral qualities of *ihzaan*, honesty/integrity, *hudnah/haun*, and courtesy.

*Ihsaan*, defined as chastity, encom-

passes the virtue surrounding procreation and means to refrain oneself from even going near any illicit behavior that would risk disgrace and humiliation in this world and chastisement in the Hereafter. It is natural for one to have tendencies or desires towards others unless one is a minor or a eunuch; the moral act being when one understands that self-restraint has value in this world and the Next. The Holy Qur'an instructs that girls not dance<sup>17</sup>, and that the unmarried engage in fasting, dieting, and exercise<sup>18</sup> to encourage self-restraint in themselves and others.<sup>19</sup>

Honesty/Integrity, defined as intolerance over negatively affecting another through any dishonest or unlawful means, requires us to oversee the property of others without even a shade of dishonesty. The Holy Qur'an explains this moral quality in terms of overseeing another's property with care<sup>20</sup>, returning property when appropriate, utilizing witnesses, refraining from taking the wealth of others through deceit or falsehood<sup>21</sup>, refraining from bribing authorities<sup>22</sup>, refraining from embezzlement, and refraining from being dishonest with what one measures<sup>23</sup>. Thus, honesty/integrity encompasses much more than simply not lying; honesty/integrity requires constant reflection in all aspects of life to become a truly moral trait.<sup>24</sup>

*Hudnah/Haun*, defined as refraining from inflicting pain on anyone and engaging in peaceful behavior, is essential for humanity and develops from controlling the natural quality of attachment. This moral quality promotes accord, peace, humility, dignity, overlooking faults of others, and repelling mischief with peace to turn enemies into friends. This moral quality also encourages one to pass difficult situations with dignity, to not be trifling, and to not become involved in mischief. Thus, *hudnah/haun* means to overlook trivial issues of annoyance that cause one no real harm.<sup>25</sup>

Courtesy, defined as cheerfulness, means to refrain from the ridicule of others, gossip, defamation of others, suspicion, backbiting, and false accusations. It also means to not call one another names, to not spy, and to say good things to people. If one is mindful that all will be called to account for what the ears, eyes, and heart feel and do, then one will be careful to act with the moral quality of courtesy.<sup>26</sup>

## Positive Morality

Positive morality, or pro-good morality, encourages the active doing of good. This type of morality is best seen in forbearance/forgiveness, equity, benevolence, and graciousness.

Forbearance/Forgiveness, defined as controlling one's temper and overlooking the faults of another when appropriate, is a moral quality that must be carefully analyzed. It does not mean to ignore and always *turn the other cheek*, but to forgive and help reform the offender if one has not suffered any real harm. God rewards such forgiving behavior. However, this moral quality is not found when one forgives when it is not in the best interest of anyone and when it encourages more harm to perpetuate. Thus, the proper time and place is of the utmost importance.<sup>27</sup>

Equity, defined as returning good for good, is the very first gradation of goodness. This moral quality echoes the *Golden Rule* everyone learns in Kindergarten: *treat others the way you want to be treated*. However, being equitable beyond limits and when inappropriate has the danger of becoming indecent.<sup>28</sup>

Benevolence, defined as going beyond equity in imparting good upon another, is difficult and requires initiative, especially if one is feeling injured. This moral quality, as seen in the word *sadaqah* which has a root that means "sincerity," requires inner truth. The Holy Qur'an offers much guidance on how to behave benevolently, such as spending only what is earned lawfully, feeding the poor and orphans what one would eat himself, spending out of love of God on all, and keeping a balance in one's life between extravagance and austerity.<sup>29</sup>

Graciousness, defined as doing good with natural eagerness as one has for one's own family, is the highest level of good. This moral quality develops when one has no desire for gratitude, but is only eager to do good for others as a mother feels for her child. Here, again, however, it is important to remember that graciousness at a proper time and place is moral; too much graciousness has been likened to *baghee*, meaning "excessive," which relates to the monsoon rains that destroy crops.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

In summary, reason is a precondition for the exercise of any moral quality, coupled

with the proper place and occasion for a particular course of action. This principle, whether applied to the aforementioned moral qualities, or to the many other moral qualities named in the Holy Qur'an, such as courage (controlled bravery)<sup>31</sup>, steadfastness (controlled fear)<sup>32</sup>, truthfulness (controlled selfishness)<sup>33</sup>, and sympathy (controlled regard)<sup>34</sup>, drives the true understanding and practice of morality. Perhaps through this complete understanding of morality, as structured by God Almighty in the Holy Qur'an, and explained by the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> in *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, today's society can prevent itself from falling into the same immoral barbaric savagery that plagued the world more than 1400 years ago.u

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "moral," Merriam-Webster.com, <http://www.merriam-webster.com> (Oct. 13, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, trans. Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan (UK: Islam International publications Ltd., 2010), 28.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad, 5–6.

<sup>4</sup> Ahmad, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad, 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad, 5–6.

<sup>8</sup> Ahmad, 23–25.

<sup>9</sup> Ahmad, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Ahmad, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad, 21.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmad, 28.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmad, 28–29.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmad, 32.

<sup>15</sup> Ahmad, 36, 42.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmad, 36–40.

<sup>17</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 24:31–32.

<sup>18</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 17:33, 24:34.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad, 43–49.

<sup>20</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 4:10–11.

<sup>21</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 2:189.

<sup>22</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 4:59.

<sup>23</sup> The Holy Qur'an, 8:59.

<sup>24</sup> Ahmad, 51–57.

<sup>25</sup> Ahmad, 57–59. The Holy Qur'an, 8:2, 4:129, 8:62, 25:64, 25:73, 41:35.

<sup>26</sup> Ahmad, 59–61. The Holy Qur'an, 2:84, 49:12, 49:13, 17:37.

<sup>27</sup> Ahmad, 61–64. The Holy Qur'an, 3:135, 42:41.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad, 64. The Holy Qur'an, 16:91.

<sup>29</sup> Ahmad, 64. The Holy Qur'an, 16:91, 2:265, 2:268, 2:196, 76:6–7, 76:9–10, 2:178, 25:68, 13:22, 51:20, 3:135, 13:23, 9:50, 3:93, 17:27, 4:37–38.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmad, 64–73. The Holy Qur'an, 16:91.

<sup>31</sup> Ahmad, 73–76. The Holy Qur'an, 2:178, 13:23, 3:174, 8:48.

<sup>32</sup> Ahmad, 79–80. The Holy Qur'an, 2:156–158.

<sup>33</sup> Ahmad, 76–78. The Holy Qur'an, 22:31, 2:283–4, 6:153, 4:136, 5:9, 33:36, 103:4, 25:73.

<sup>34</sup> Ahmad, 80–81. The Holy Qur'an, 5:3, 4:105, 4:108.

# Islamic Law in Western Nations

By Azhar Ahmed Hussain

Islamic law and western countries have a unique relationship that spans nearly 900 years, a relationship that, due to misconception and manufactured hysteria, is undergoing an era of tension. Many of Islam's most fervent opponents often point to perceived dangers of Islamic law creeping into the American legal system. News pundits, bloggers, and electoral candidates use the concept Islamic law as the epitome of anti-Americanism and indict it as a threat to western culture. Critics look to the Muslim Arbitration Tribunals in England as the start non-secular, Islamic law replacing Western legal systems. Consequently, The Idea of Islamic law in the United States has become so feared that eight states have proposed laws that will ban Islamic law entirely.<sup>1</sup> These efforts are ironic because the Islamic legal system was the inspiration for the Common Law system, a system that is effectuated in the United States, United Kingdom, and her Commonwealth Nations. Some of the verses of the Qur'an provide the background for many of the features found in the modern courtroom.



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## The Condemnation of Islamic Law in the West

Bloggers like Pamela Gellar frequent daily news programs to paint a false and politically motivated picture of Islam and by doing so undermine the relationship between Muslims and Americans. The denigration of Islamic law has reached a fever pitch during the American Presidential campaign. Candidates like Herman Cain have stated that they wouldn't appoint a Muslim as a candidate member or federal judge without first taking an oath to denounce *Sharia*. When asked if this same oath would be required of a Mormon or Catholic cabinet appointment, Cain stated, "Nope, I wouldn't. Because there is a greater dangerous part of the Muslim faith than there is in these other religions."<sup>2</sup>

Sadly, this disposition isn't limited to the United States. Dutch Politician Geert Wilders has built a political career on criticism of Islam and created a legislative platform based on opposing the religion of Islam, its culture, and its law. Wilder's falsely asserts that that Islamic law, among many things, permits abuse of women, repression of freedom, and the archaic practice of infanticide.<sup>3</sup>

This Islamic opposition ideology, sadly, is the manifestation of a fundamentally incorrect interpretation of Islamic law practiced by mainstream Sunni Muslims. Many of the aforementioned pundits, bloggers, and politicians are merely reacting to the misinterpreted Islamic legal systems found in nations like Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

## Islamic Law in Muslim Nations

The paradigm through which western societies view Islamic law is tied to its practice in the Islamic world. The current state of Islamic law in Muslim majority nations is in crisis. Narrow and misinformed interpretations from the Holy Quran coupled with policy centered on maintaining dictatorial

control prevent access to justice. Repugnant, inexcusable, and un-Islamic tragedies occur in the so-called Islamic nations as a result. From these tragedies, many critics of Islamic law gain ammunition for their assault against Islam.

Legal statutes from nations like Saudi Arabia that prevent women from leaving their homes without the permission of their husbands or fathers have created de facto legal theories that equate women to property and slaves. The horrific consequence is a legal system that permits domestic abuse and prevents access for women to gain the necessary relief as well as their

women inferior to men and to deny them justice. Unfortunately, it is from these distorted legal foundations in countries like Saudi Arabia that many in Western societies form their views of Islamic law.

## Sharia in the United Kingdom

A recent phenomenon in the United Kingdom is the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal system that enacts *Sharia* law. Arbitration is a method of dispute resolution involving neutral third parties who are agreed to by the disputing parties and whose decision is binding<sup>5</sup>. The Muslim

Arbitration Tribunals use the freedom allowed by arbitration to enact the rules and remedies found in the Qur'an. These tribunals operate solely for civil cases ranging from divorce to inheritance disputes and issue judgments according to remedies found in the Qur'an and Hadith.<sup>6</sup> Though these tribunals operate fully within the context of British law, they exhibit a



*Narrow and misinformed interpretations from the Holy Quran coupled with policy centered on maintaining dictatorial control prevent access to justice.*

fundamental right to justice.<sup>4</sup> This is entirely contrary to the philosophy of the Qur'an. While Islam propagates and supports the concept of a traditional patriarchal family, it also supports equality as illustrated by the Qur'an: "So their Lord answered their prayers, saying, 'I will allow not the work of any worker from among you, whether male or female, to be lost. You are from one another'" (3:196). The equality principle in Islamic law is further codified in the Qur'an by formally granting the right for women to divorce their husbands. Clearly it is antithetical to the philosophy of Islam to create a legal foundation to treat

few major flaws. First, the arbiters in these tribunals are *Imams* who were raised and were trained in Muslim Majority countries. Consequently, they are unaware of societal and cultural norms of England.<sup>7</sup> Second, a singular body of Islamic law is incredibly difficult to discern given that an accurate interpretation of Islamic law is defined by its historical and societal context.<sup>8</sup>

The *Sharia* compliant Arbitration Tribunals in the United Kingdom have sparked fierce debate across western nations. Many believe that the system

undermines British law and is the first step in *Sharia* law usurping British Law by creating a parallel legal system. Others believe that Muslims have the right to practice their religion and that since the arbitration system exists within British law, the system is fundamentally legal.

### **Islamic Law and Common Law**

Though Islamic law is currently viewed by many western critics as a despotic tool of tyranny and oppression, the reality is that Islamic Law and Common law are akin to each other. The concepts of a trial to settle disputes, trials by jury, and witness testimony all have their roots in Islamic law. One theory proposes that the *Maliki* school of Islam first established this system, which then gained widespread popularity in North Africa and Sicily during the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>

Before the English Common law system became the legal standard for England, many fiefdoms practiced barbaric legal systems that involved violent tests to determine justice. For example, land and real estate disputes were settled by single hand combat, the winner of which was deemed the rightful owner of the disputed land. The rationale behind this system was that God would intervene on behalf of the innocent party.<sup>10</sup> King Henry II replaced this system sometime between 1155 and 1166 with the process of “assize of novel disseisin” which would establish rightful possession of land with a trial by jury- rather than coarse physical combat.<sup>11</sup>

One theory attributes the concept of a jury to Islamic law. Though it is disputed whether English Common law is a descendant of Roman law, compelling evidence suggests that the foundations for a trial by jury are found in the Qur'an. In the Qur'an, Allah states “why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it? Since they have not brought the required witnesses, they are indeed liars in the sight of Allah”(24:14). In modern Common law courts, the jury is comprised of unbiased citizens ordered to render an impartial verdict, however juries in early Common Law courts were constructed in a ‘trial-by-witness’ system whereby jurors were witnesses. These jurors were responsible for fact finding and were charged with the task of rendering a verdict.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Juries in Islamic courts were comprised of witnesses who were responsible for issuing a

unanimous decision.

Witnesses brought forth the settle disputes in the Common Law system must be established as having credibility in addition to swearing testimony under oath. In a modern day courtroom, attorneys will first direct a line of questioning aimed at verifying the witness's reliability. This is no different than early common law practices whereby a minimum of two credible witnesses, who were sworn to tell the truth under oath, were needed to settle any dispute.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the punishment for lying under oath in the Common law system is perjury, a criminal indictment. In the Islamic law system, absolute justice is more than simply a duty owed to society, it is commanded by Allah in the Qur'an “be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness”(5:9). Also, the modern day charge of perjury is similar to the Islamic law punishment for lying under oath where the person who gave the false testimony was taken through the streets and proclaimed a liar.<sup>14</sup>

Both Islamic law and Common law rely on society and ordinary citizens, rather than the false promise of divine intervention, to find remedies for their disputes. This system was groundbreaking for its time and marked the revival of logic, rationality, and justice, all of which had been missing in Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire.

### **Conclusion**

Though in our current era, Islamic law of often used as a negative term to rally an ill informed and prejudiced political base, it is woven into the fabric of Common law system. While many believe that *Sharia* is simply a system to assert total control, it is more accurate to classify it as a system to procure absolute justice. Though many Muslim majority countries use *Sharia* as a means for subjugation, this is clearly a misuse of Islamic law. The Muslim Arbitration Tribunals in England, though legally permissible, cannot possibly produce an accurate verdict because they lack the necessary elements to secure absolute justice. An *Imam* from a foreign country, alone, cannot possibly render a decision that gives full due to justice because it lacks the cultural context that a

jury provides. The Islamic legal system is based on the fundamental idea that society is capable of providing justice. For Muslims, justice is a duty that is a part of faith, a responsibility owed to Allah and to our fellow man. Islamic Law was revolutionary for its time, so much so that its impact is seen thriving in this modern era in the same nations that condemn it.

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<sup>1</sup> Ashby Jones, “Efforts to Ban Sharia Law in Courts Spreading” *The Wall Street Journal* December 9, 2010, Accessed September 13, 2011, <http://blogs.wsj.com/law/2010/12/09/efforts-to-ban-sharia-law-in-courts-spreading/>

<sup>2</sup> Scott Keys, “Herman Cain Would Require Muslim Appointees to Take a Loyalty Oath” Think Progress: (2011) accessed October 3, 2011. <http://thinkprogress.org/politics/2011/06/08/240415/herman-cain-require-muslim-appointees-loyalty-oath/>

<sup>2.1</sup> Matt Schneider, “Herman Cain: If I'm President I won't Appoint Muslim Cabinet Members or Judges,” Mediaite, (2011) Accessed October 31, 2011, <http://www.mediaite.com/online/herman-cain-if-im-president-i-wont-appoint-muslim-judges-or-cabinet-members/>

<sup>3</sup> Koen Vossen, “Populism in the Netherlands after Fortuyn: Rita Verdonk and Geert Wilders Compared” *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 11 (2010) 22-38.

<sup>4</sup> “Perpetual Minors: Human Rights abuses stemming from Male Guardianship and Sex Segregation in Saudi Arabia” *Human Rights Watch* (2008) 24.

<sup>5</sup> Blacks Law Dictionary, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. s.v. ‘Arbitration.’

<sup>6</sup> Richard Edwards, “Sharia Courts Operating in Britain,” *The Telegraph* (2008).

<sup>7</sup> Claire Dwyer Hogg and Jonathan Wynne-Johnes, “We Want to Offer Sharia Law to Britain,” *UK Daily Mail* (2008)

<sup>8</sup> Qudsia Mirza “Sacred and Secular Blasphemies,” *Griffith Law Review* vol 12 no 2 (2003) 5

<sup>9</sup> John Makdisi, “The Islamic Origins of Common Law,” *North Carolina Law Review* (1999) 39

<sup>10</sup> id., 15

<sup>11</sup> id., 14

<sup>12</sup> id., 23

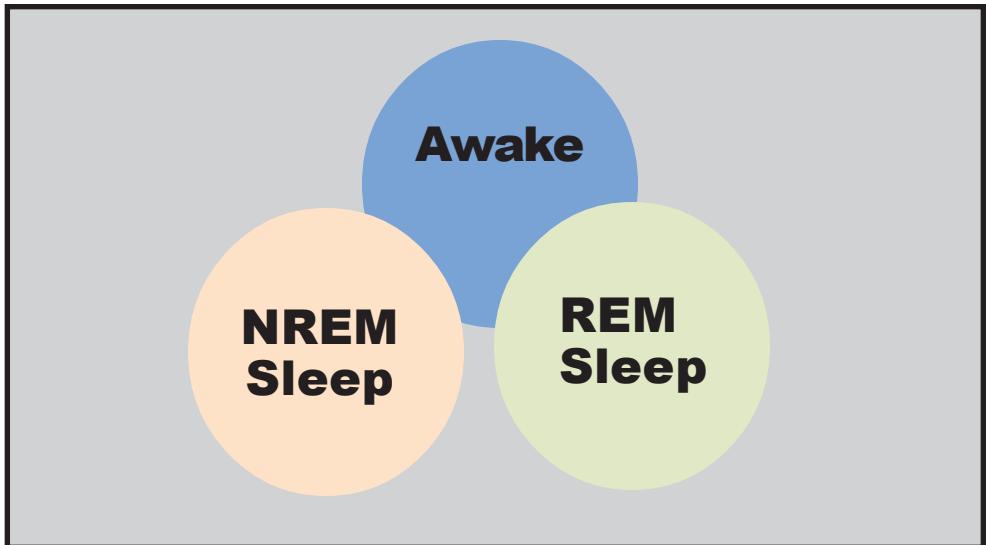
<sup>13</sup> id., 23

<sup>14</sup> Matthew Lippman et al, “Islamic Criminal Law and Procedure: and introduction” (1988)

# True Nature of Divine Revelations

By Zia Shah

Christopher Hitchens has been called one of the four horsemen of neo-Atheism. In a very well attended and televised debate in Mexico in 2009, regarding evolution and religion, he along with Sam Harris and Daniel Dennett represented atheism against theist debaters. In a friendly tone he suggested, "I do not know about you, but if I know someone in a public bus, who is hearing voices, I will quickly move away from him."<sup>1</sup> This was a convenient trick of bait and switch! He described a schizophrenic and then implied a Prophet. There is only a superficial resemblance between them and there exists a clear distinction between the two, as will become apparent from the reading of this article. Common sense understanding of sleep is that it is a period of inactivity of brain. But, since 1953, when dreaming or REM sleep was discovered, we know that it is very far from the truth. In REM sleep human brain is as active as in the awake state, if not more; just the activity is of a different kind.



The three states of human existence, wakefulness, NREM and REM sleep have different physiological features, some of which are exclusive to them. Sometimes, in health or disease, features of one state can intrude into another. This gives us insight into the physical aspects of revelation, while awake. Revelation should be thought of as intrusion of dreaming of REM state into the state of full wakefulness.

A commonly known manifestation of intrusion of one state into another that most of the perceptive adult population has witnessed or at least heard about is sleep walking, which is intrusion of some features of awake state into NREM sleep. Sleepwalkers arise from the slow wave sleep stage in a state of low consciousness and perform activities that are usually performed during a state of full consciousness. These activities can be as benign as sitting up in bed, walking to the bathroom, and cleaning, or as hazardous as cooking, driving, violent gestures, grabbing at hallucinated

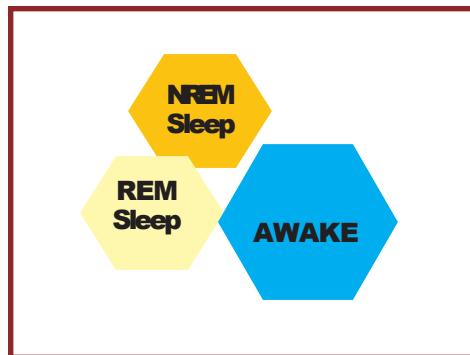
In a fashion, similar to sleep walking, intrusion of dreaming in the awake state, should be considered a model for revelation.

## Description of revelation by the Messiah of this age: Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's<sup>as</sup> description of revelation, suggests intrusion of REM sleep like state during wakefulness. He says:

The physicians have prescribed some natural means for sleep but I have observed that when Allah wants to reveal something to me, He suddenly brings a state of drowsiness and sleepiness in the midst of perfect wakefulness. He takes me away from a physical to a spiritual realm and after He has revealed something, he bestows full consciousness that the recipient of revelation has a chance to assimilate the revelation. He gives drowsiness again and wakefulness again to memorize, at times these cycles can up to 50 times and these are special influences from God. Such revelations are not the same as normal sleep and the physicians do not understand the details of this.<sup>1</sup>

This very insightful and instructive description was mentioned in 1900, more than 5 decades before the discovery of REM sleep in 1950s. With better under-



standing of REM sleep, this excerpt highlights for us the physical nature of true revelations. Of course, the supernatural aspect of revelation will always evade human reductionism, as God is Subtle and Imperceptible, but as the Infinite meets the finite, the end result is observable and understandable by the human mind and appropriate mixing of REM sleep and wakefulness, perhaps, serves as the best model or metaphor for human understanding.

### The continuum of intuition to true dreams to prophetic revelations

Every one of us has had our creative moments of a good idea and original intuitions. Some of us would have been recipients of true dreams also. The Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> said, “True dreams are one of the forty-six parts of Prophethood.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, true dreams are not limited to pious persons only; anyone can be recipient of true dreams. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> notes that the blessings of *Al Rahman* God are general and for all. He writes in his book, *Nature of Revelation*, “God All Mighty has with a few exceptions granted all men with eyes, nose and ears and blessed them with sense of smell and other senses and has not been miserly towards any nation. Likewise, Allah has not excluded any people or nation from the blessings of the basic seed of the spiritual faculties. Just like the sunlight reaches every place and no place whether clean or dirty is exempted from it. Same is the law for the light of the spiritual sun and it shines in all places regardless of the spiritual station. However, it is true that this spiritual light loves a heart that is clean, pure and true.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, dreams, even the true ones, are a shared feature among all humans. There are, however, differences in true dreams of the ordinary and the pious, in terms of frequency, subject matter and clarity. This is examined by me in an article available on Google-knol, *Al Aleem: The Bestower of true Dreams*.<sup>4</sup>

Today, people have a lot of misunderstandings about revelations because of false prophets and con artists. An evangelical broadcaster whose end-of-

the-world prophecy earlier this year stirred a global media frenzy has now vanished from the public eye and airwaves ahead of his recalibrated doomsday date, set for Friday, October 21, 2011.

Originally, he had predicted May 21, 2011 as the day of apocalypse. After the apocalypse failed to materialize, Harold Camping emerged from a brief seclusion to say he had merely miscalculated by five months, and he pronounced a new Judgment Day, October 21.

The following month, the now 90-year-old former civil engineer was said by his California-based Christian radio network to have suffered a stroke that left him hospitalized.

He has largely dropped out of sight since then, and his daily radio program, “Open Forum,” broadcast on more than 60 U.S. stations, has been canceled.<sup>5</sup> He was only one of the examples, in recent times, of false prophets who have created bad name for revelations.

### Hallucinations versus genuine revelations

Hallucinations of a malfunctioning brain or a schizophrenic must be distinguished from the revelations of a saint or a prophet or a true dream of a scientist. The immediate and obvious difference between a mad person and a saint or a prophet is that the former is a failure, while the later is a high achiever. Here, I will quote a Christian, a historian and a politician, who served as Foreign Minister of France also briefly, Alphonse de Lamartine, as he highlights the achievements of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, “If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and outstanding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad?”<sup>6</sup> Additionally, I add a few references to establish the unprecedented accomplishments of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>.<sup>7 8 9</sup> We believe Jesus<sup>as</sup> to be a true prophet also and the devotion and the dedication of his disciples, later to be called apostles, is a testament to the truth of his revelations and his great achievements through his followers. So, whereas, a schizophrenic has rambling ideas and

is a failure, a true prophet is the wisest of the wise and the best among the high achievers. A movie titled *A Beautiful Mind*, about Nobel Laureate John Nash, shows his life story.<sup>10 11</sup> The movie shows his struggle with his hallucinations until he masters them and is cured of his illness. After decades of suffering, he becomes able to dissociate hallucinations from his normal life experiences. For a more detailed understanding of this issue, of distinguishing hallucinations from the blessings of revelations, go to my Google-knol titled, *Al Aleem God: The Bestower of true Dreams!*<sup>12</sup>

### Sleep, memory and learning

We are learning while we are sleeping — an unconscious form of memory that is still not well understood, according to a recent study by Michigan State University researchers. The findings are highlighted in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*.

“We speculate that we may be investigating a separate form of memory, distinct from traditional memory systems,” said Kimberly Fenn, assistant professor of psychology and lead researcher on the project. “There is substantial evidence that during sleep, your brain is processing information without your awareness and this ability may contribute to memory in a waking state.” In the study of more than 250 people, Fenn and Zach Hambrick, associate professor of psychology, suggest people derive vastly different effects from this “sleep memory” ability, with some memories improving dramatically and others not at all.<sup>13</sup>

If you see a student dozing in the library or a co-worker catching 40 winks in her cubicle, don’t roll your eyes. New research from the University of California, Berkeley, shows that an hour’s nap can dramatically boost and restore your brain power. Indeed, the findings suggest that a biphasic sleep schedule not only refreshes the mind, but can make you smarter. Conversely, the more hours we spend awake, the more sluggish our minds become, according to the findings. The results support previous data from the same research team that pulling an all-nighter — a common

***Every one of us has had our creative moments of a good idea and original intuitions. Some of us would have been recipients of true dreams also. The Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> said, “True dreams are one of the forty-six parts of Prophethood.”***

practice at college during midterms and finals — decreases the ability to cram in new facts by nearly 40 percent, due to a shutdown of brain regions during sleep deprivation. “Sleep not only rights the wrong of prolonged wakefulness but, at a neuro-cognitive level, it moves you beyond where you were before you took a nap,” said Matthew Walker, an assistant professor of psychology at UC Berkeley and the lead investigator of these studies.<sup>14</sup>

In some Youtube and ForaTV videos Matthew Walker has nicely described the recent associations between sleep and learning.<sup>15 16</sup>

### Science revealed

In 1865 a German chemist, Friedrich August Kekule, was struggling to solve a problem in chemistry that had baffled all researchers. One night Kekule had a dream in which he saw a snake with its tail held in its mouth. This dream instantly put him on the right track leading to the solution of the perplexing question. Thus was unraveled the secret of the molecular behavior in certain organic compounds, a discovery which created a revolution in the understanding of organic chemistry. He interpreted this dream to mean that in the benzene molecule, carbon atoms bond together to form a ring structure. This knowledge gave birth to the huge and highly developed field of synthetic organic chemistry producing a vast new range of synthetic materials. The contemporary pharmaceutical industry has become growingly dependent on synthetic drugs. Mankind is indeed indebted to that one dream through which Kekule resolved that problem.

Elias Howe was the first person to mechanize the process of sewing. He too

received the answer to a problem that had frustrated him for a long time through a dream. In his dream he saw himself surrounded by savages, who threatened to kill him unless he designed a sewing machine. Being unable to respond he was tied to a tree and the savages started to attack him with arrows and spears. It surprised him to see eyelets on their spearheads. On waking from this dream, he immediately realized the solution, which led him to invent the prototype of the sewing machine that was to dramatically revolutionize the sewing industry. Through his dream he understood that he should consider placing the eye of the needle in its point. It was this idea which helped him resolve a seemingly impossible task. It is difficult to visualize the sorry state in which man would find himself today without the blessing of this dream. What a revolution was created indeed by this revelation!

How can we distinguish a dream arising purely from subconscious mind versus a revelation? It will have to be based on the judgment as to whether the subconscious could host the information revealed in the dream or not. If the information is altogether new and novel and there is no reason to believe that a certain person's subconscious possessed that knowledge then the most reasonable explanation is to give credit to All Knowing Allah for that particular piece of information. More specifically, the human mind has no ability to know the future with any degree of certainty. We, humans can only conjecture about the future but only the Omniscient knows the precise details!<sup>17</sup>

### Epilogue

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah tells the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> to announce,

“Say, ‘I am only a man like yourselves; but I have received the revelation that your God is only One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord do good deeds, and let him join no one in the worship of his Lord’” ( 18:111). This verse describes the distinction between the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> and ordinary people. However, the religion has been completed in the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and there cannot be any new *Shariah* or law bearing prophets. Likewise, to be a non-law bearing prophet is also a very tall order. But, as mentioned before the door of true dreams is open and if we look for effective tools, we can develop not only in the domains of intuitions and unconscious learning but also true dreams. This article is meant to only ignite a spark and sow a seed! The journey is long but not tiring. It is rather very enjoyable, like a visit to a popular and beautiful destination. It is time to take the trip; “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step,” according to the Prophet Confucius.

**Zia Shah** is a doctor practicing in sleep and lung disorders in upstate New York. He also is the editor of Muslim Times, an online blog.

### Endnotes

- 1 Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani. Malfoozat, volume: I/V page 303.
- 2 Book of Hadith, Bukhari and Muslim.
- 3 Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> Haqiqat-ul-Wahi, Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 22, pp. 26.
- 4 <http://knol.google.com/k/zia-shah/al-aleem-the-bestower-of-true-dreams/1qhnnhcumbyup/13?collectionId=1qhnnhcumbyup.218#>
- 5 <http://news.yahoo.com/radio-prophet-gone-airwaves-judgment-day-eve-01192225.html>
- 6 <http://www.alislam.org/egazette/eGazette-Feb2009.pdf>
- 7 <http://knol.google.com/k/zia-shah/muhammad-the-greatest-of-the-sons-of/1qhnnhcumbyup/105?collectionId=1qhnnhcumbyup.283>
- 8 <http://knol.google.com/k/zia-shah/muhammad-the-light-for-the-dark-ages-of/1qhnnhcumbyup/309?collectionId=1qhnnhcumbyup.283>
- 9 <http://knol.google.com/k/tribute-to-islam-the-prophet-muhammad-and-quran-by-non-muslim-writers?collectionId=1qhnnhcumbyup.283>
- 10 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_beautiful\\_Mind\\_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_beautiful_Mind_(film))
- 11 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aS\\_d0Ayjw4o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aS_d0Ayjw4o)
- 12 <http://knol.google.com/k/zia-shah/al-aleem-the-bestower-of-true-dreams/1qhnnhcumbyup/13>
- 13 <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/09/110927124653.htm#.ToLspfxaOo.hotmail>
- 14 [http://newscenter.berkeley.edu/2010/02/22/naps\\_boost\\_learning\\_capacity/](http://newscenter.berkeley.edu/2010/02/22/naps_boost_learning_capacity/)
- 15 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=giKIFuw5fyc&feature=fvst>
- 16 [http://fora.tv/2009/08/11/Matt\\_Walker\\_Secrets\\_of\\_the\\_Sleeping\\_Brain](http://fora.tv/2009/08/11/Matt_Walker_Secrets_of_the_Sleeping_Brain)
- 17 Al Qur'an 72:26-28.

If someone were to ask you, "Why should you be moral?" an intuitive response, regardless of age, experience, education, or position in life would be "because it is the right thing to do!" However, such a response should raise even more questions. If we are truly moral people, then why are we falling short in our moral characters? In reviewing world events and noting the senseless wars, social injustices, economic inequality, religious intolerance, racisms, discriminations, hate crimes, etc, have we, as individuals and as a society lost our moral compass, our moral bearings? Stated in another way, could these senseless wars, deaths, and campaigns of ethnic or racial purging have been avoided if we could morally empower ourselves and thus influence others?

Moral empowerment is a very complex subject because of the variables that enter into the equation. For example, our varied lifestyles and dynamically changing roles and relationships (as daughters, sisters, wives and

# The Moral Empowerment of Women

By Shanaz Butt, Ph.D.

mothers) place different demands upon us, thus coloring our views of morality over our lifespan. Our placement in the social system also affects the way we interpret the moral elements of any given situation. Whether male or female, employer or employee, old or young, senior or junior in a firm, educated or not; all have an impact on how we read into the moral meanings of different situations.

If you include the cultural environment and social conventions in which we grew up, an even more complicated framework of moral practices develop. Furthermore, moral reasoning and moral actions are also closely connected to our religious values and beliefs. In a research study, pregnant women were asked whether abortion was an issue of personal choice and privacy, or was it a moral issue involving the life of another person. Interestingly, those women who chose to have an abortion viewed the issue as a matter of privacy and personal choice. However, women who treated abortion as a moral issue went to full term with their pregnancies. When the women's religious affiliations were also included in the research, it was observed that those women who practiced a religion had a tendency to go to full term with the pregnancy.

Hence, how does one agree that a given action is a moral action? It would depend on the complex nature of the moral intent. If, for example, I volunteer to work in a soup kitchen because it will increase my chances of getting into my college of choice, is my volunteering

moral? If I volunteer because it will make me feel good about myself, rather than because I feel compelled to volunteer in order to alleviate the suffering of others, is my action moral? Thus, without knowing why I volunteered, one cannot realize to what extent I did or did not engage in moral deliberation.

Is there such a thing as perfect morals? If we agree that moral action should be free from all defects, then how does one achieve such perfect morals? How can we morally empower ourselves such that we will make the "right" decision and follow the "right" way of life - even at the sacrifice of our immediate interests?



The Holy Qur'an and writings of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> in *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* eloquently present us with practical answers and solutions to empower our development into perfect beings. There are three stages of human development; the natural, the moral and the spiritual. The lowest stage is called the natural or the most primitive stage; such as eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, anger, fear, aggression, affection, and courage, as seen in animals. While there is a general misconception that love, forgiveness and courage are good moral qualities whereas fear, hate and anger are undesirable qualities, neither of these natural instincts are good or bad qualities in and of themselves. For example, if I am always kind and forgiving, these qualities will no longer be considered moral if my child is caught lying or stealing and I do not correct, admonish or punish my child. Thus, it is the control and regulation of these natural in-

stincts using reason and understanding that will transform them into moral characteristics, and is referred to as the second stage or the moral stage of development.

Moral development is a two-step process because it requires us to perform good deeds while at the same time discard or refrain from bad deeds. Moral development truly begins when a person is able to distinguish right from wrong, and feels sorry when she misses an opportunity to do good and becomes remorseful when she does something wrong. Accordingly, the moral stage is also called the self-reproving stage because the struggle to do good deeds is accompanied by an effort to refrain from doing bad deeds. The Holy Qur'an refers to this stage as *Jihad Bin Nafs* (struggle of the self or a self striving). The Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> referred to this *Jihad* as a greatest of all *Jihads*. Thus, moral consciousness develops from reproving ourselves over a wrong done and becoming anxious about doing more good than harm. And given that, moral empowerment expects of us that we continue to develop ourselves and reach higher moral excellence, and since there is no limit to our personal moral and spiritual progress, our continued effort then leads to a spiritual awakening whereby we become more mindful of the existence of God and this understanding and awareness stimulates further progression to the highest stage which is called the spiritual stage or the *Soul at Peace*. This stage can only be achieved through the use of every moral quality in its proper place, at the proper occasion, and for the proper reasons.

Moral empowerment does not happen overnight; it takes place in gradual stages. The Holy Qur'an mentions six stages of progress from the lowest to the highest stage of moral development.

*Verily, God enjoins justice and the doing of good to others, and giving like kindred; and forbids indecency and manifest evil and transgression* (16:91). This verse is universal and applicable to all people regardless of race, religion, color, etc., because it embodies the various stages of development by enjoining the performance of such actions that lead to moral perfection and forbids us from doing such actions as are detrimental to the realization of such perfection.

The first injunction is justice. It implies that a person should treat others as she is treated by them – return good for good and bad for bad to the extent received. The second level is a little more difficult because it

## **Moral development is a two-step process because it requires us to perform good deeds while at the same time discard or refrain from bad deeds.**

requires a person to take the initiative to perform an act of goodness regardless of the sort of treatment she will receive in return. Most people tend to act kindly towards the poor, but the person who is exercising such kindness is usually conscious of it and desires some form of gratitude or acknowledgement in return. In the highest level of moral progress, a person is expected to do good to others, not in return for any good received but prompted by pure and eager compassion and love, similar to the love and compassion that a mother displays when she stays awake at night to tend to her sick child. Her sacrifices and hardships are prompted by no hope of return or appreciation. A mother does good out of a fountain of love that God has implanted in her heart for her child. This is where moral development reaches the highest level in relationship to mankind. This verse points to the fact that nearness to God comes through service to mankind and developing a loving relationship with humanity. As a result of doing good for God's creations with no expectations in return, we develop morally and spiritually and therefore, these three injunctions are considered to be the positive aspects of moral development.

Moral empowerment mandates that we do good while refraining from bad actions. The three injunctions that we should refrain from are indecency; vices of which the knowledge is confined to the doer alone. For example, back biting, jealousy, feeling ill will against others, etc., manifest evil, vices which can be seen by others and are condemned by others although others may not suffer on account of them. For example, immodesty, infidelity, etc., and wrongful transgression; vices that are not only seen, felt and condemned by society but which also bring devastating harm

to the individual and others. For example, killing, persecution, acts of terrorism, acts of violence, hate crimes, and so on.

If we reflect on these stages of moral development, we realize that a good portion of our lives are spent in the self-reproach mode for not having said or done the right thing at the right time and for the right reasons. This stage becomes the rate determining step or the slowest step in our development because it requires the greatest energy, the greatest struggle. Think of a traffic jam - you can only go as fast as the slowest car ahead of you, making that car your rate determining step in reaching your destination in a timely manner. In almost every aspect of our lives, we set short term and long term goals and compete with others to reach some level of excellence or promotion; whether it is in school, college, jobs, careers, homes or in the community. However, we should also set goals towards higher moral excellence.

*And everyone has a goal towards which he turns his attention. Then, vie with one another in doing good works.* (1:149). As women, we tend to forget or underestimate just how wide our sphere of influence really is. One of the first steps towards the moral empowerment of women is to realize and accept moral responsibility and moral accountability to ourselves and those who depend on us. In a spirit of healthy competition, women should strive for greater moral uplift both individually and as a community.

In conclusion, moral empowerment is not the end; rather the beginning of a journey of personal reflections, accountability and responsibility. Moral empowerment is an attitude that speaks louder than words. Moral empowerment is a transformation from the more primitive to the moral and spiritual stages, and this change radiates from the inside to influence and transform the outside. Moral empowerment comes when we gather the strength to face the obstacles that hinder our moral progress and eliminate these obstacles one by one. Moral empowerment begins when we are willing to look for commonalities in all religious and cultural societies that help guide and support our moral growth and development. Such efforts can only unite us and empower us as moral individuals, communities, and as a nation.

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# Importance of Chaste Living in Any Society

By Dr. Khaula Rehman

**C**hastity and family values go hand in hand and there is no artificial means to conveniently separate them. It has been said that there is a marriage meltdown in USA and Europe. There are several reasons that can be cited for this far too common phenomenon, but, by far the biggest reason is the lack of appreciation of chastity that has gradually evolved, or shall we say devolved, in the last century in the Western world.

The transformative trends of the past 50 years that have led to a sharp decline in marriage and a rise of new family forms have been shaped by attitudes and behaviors that have been studied by a new Pew Research Center nationwide survey, conducted in association with TIME magazine, and complemented by an analysis of demographic and economic data from the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>1</sup> According to this survey, in 1960, two-thirds (68%) of all *twenty-somethings* were married. In 2008, just 26% were. In other words marriage is an exception rather than the rule in the Generation Y, which is also known as the Millennial Generation or Net Generation, describes those with birth dates ranging somewhere from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s.

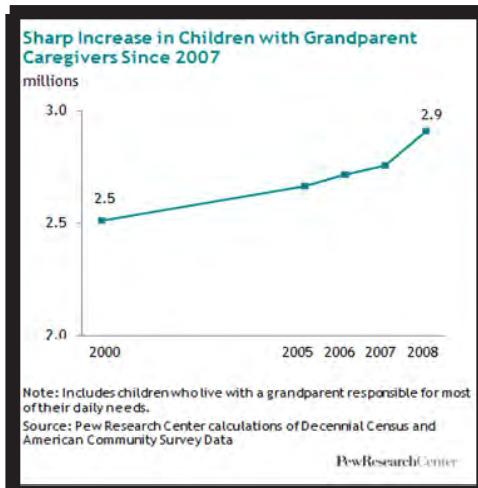
There are many negative consequences to abandoning chastity, including marriage meltdown, domestic violence, single parenting, STDs, teen pregnancy, child sexual abuse and psychological problems in children raised by single parents. Some of these will be discussed in this article and references provided for others.

One child in 10 in the United States lives with a grandparent, a share that increased

slowly and steadily over the past decade before rising sharply from 2007 to 2008, the first year of the Great Recession, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.<sup>2</sup>

In USA, now only 25% of children are living in conventional families with both biological parents. Children suffer the greatest damage from broken homes. All stories are not tragic but when you look at the information in aggregate the case is overwhelming. The number of fatherless children is constantly on the rise. In 1960 17.5% of children were living without their fathers. Despite the increase in medical technology and life expectancy, in 1990, 36.3% of children were living away from their fathers. David Blankenhorn calls this trend "Fatherless America" and "Fatherless society." What is the cause of this growing trend which is predicted to rise to 50% in the early part of the 21st century? David Blankenhorn in his book "Fatherless America" traces the origins of youth violence, domestic violence against women, child sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy and many of the psychiatric problems in adolescents to broken families and fatherlessness.<sup>3</sup>

Chastity refers to the sexual behavior of a man or woman acceptable to the moral standards and guidelines of a culture, civilization, or religion. All religious traditions value chas-



ity and institution of marriage, even though the details may differ to some degree.

Christianity defines chastity as the virtue that moderates the sexual appetite. It teaches the law of chastity to its followers which is to refrain from adultery and fornication and to avoid

sexually inappropriate thoughts. Sexual relations within marriage are considered chaste when it retains the twofold significance of union and procreation. One of the seven deadly sins in Christianity is lust.

In the Old Testament chastity is stressed. One of the Ten Commandments is, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). Judaism forbids sexual relations outside of marriage. The general view in Judaism is that sex is primarily for reproduction and building a family.

There are several verses in the New Testament highlighting chastity, including:

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality. (Thessalonians 4:3)

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Colossians 3:5)

But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. (Corinthians 7:2)

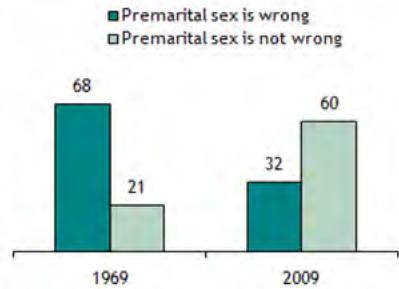
The Hindu tradition of Brahmacharya places great emphasis on abstinence as a way of harnessing the energy of body and mind towards the goal of spiritual realization. There is a strong societal taboo against pre-marital sex for both males and females, which still exists today in Hindu societies.

In Buddhism the third principle in Pancha Sheela, Buddhists pledge to refrain from unlawful sexual relationships. The second of the Four Noble Truths states that the ultimate cause of all suffering is attachment and unquenchable desire (*tanha*), and the third states that the way to eliminate suffering is to eliminate attachment and desire. Sexual practices are characterized as both attachment (*kama-upadana*) and desire (*kama-tanha*).

Islam gives prime importance to chastity. Islam has set forth excellent teachings for how to acquire the quality of chastity and has given directions in the Holy Qur'an for both men and women:

"Direct the believing men to restrain their eyes from looking at women outside the prohibited degrees so openly as to be sexually excited by them, and to cultivate the habit of guarding their looks. They

### Changing Views on Premarital Sex



Note: "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

Source: For 1969, Gallup Organization (July 24-29, 1969; N=1,555); for 2009, CBS/New York Times (Jan 11-15, 2009; N=1,112)

PewResearchCenter

should safeguard all their senses. For instance, they should not listen to the singing or charming voice of women outside the prohibited degrees nor should they listen to descriptions of their beauty. This is a good way of preserving the purity of their looks and hearts. In the same way, direct the believing women that they should restrain their eyes from looking at men outside the prohibited degrees and should safeguard their ears against listening to the passionate voice of such men. They should cover up their beauty and should not disclose it to anyone outside the prohibited degrees." (Al Qur'an 24:31-32)

We will return to Islam and chastity in the Epilogue of this article.

I made a claim in the very beginning that the meltdown of marriage results from abandoning chastity. To many it may be self evident but some may ask for a more formal proof for this. Pew Research Forum survey depicted in the graphs below should illustrate the relationship between views about premarital sex and chastity and break down of marriages.

As marriage has declined, cohabitation (or living together as unmarried partners) has become more widespread, nearly doubling since 1990, according to the Census Bureau. In the Pew Research survey, 44% of all adults (and more than half of all adults ages 30 to 49) say they have cohabited at some point in their lives. With this trend almost 60% of the population now believes that premarital sex is not wrong and a direct consequence of this trend is that almost half of the population is not married.

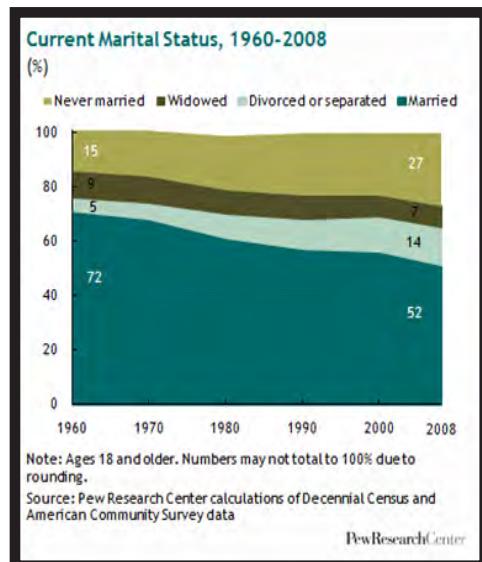
To summarize the demographics, in the past few decades, the face of the American

family has changed profoundly. As sociologist Andrew J. Cherlin observes in a landmark new book called "The Marriage-Go-Round: The State of Marriage and the Family in America Today," what is significant about contemporary American families, compared with those of other nations, is their combination of "frequent marriage, frequent divorce" and the high number of "short-term co-habiting relationships." Taken together, these forces "create a great turbulence in American family life, a family flux, a coming and going of partners on a scale seen nowhere else."<sup>4</sup>

In an earlier edition of *The Muslim Sunrise*, Zia H Shah MD proves in his article *Atheism: Nietzsche and Dawkins* how HIV prevalence is much lower in Muslim majority countries in Africa compared to countries with Christian majority or other reli-

and sensible answer to all these problems almost 1400 years ago. Islam's approach is positive and proactive, not waiting for problems to occur and then trying to find solutions, but to stop them from happening. Islam's approach is systematic. It addresses change in the entire society, not just in the individual. Islam gives a system for producing and maintaining a social climate in a society that is conducive to allowing human beings to achieve the real goal of their creation which is the worship of God.

The Holy Qur'an has a vision to create a society, where men and women respect one another and help one another achieve nearness to God; where a woman does not need to compromise her dignity, her integrity and her self esteem at any time. The Quranic teachings of modesty, chastity and other 'family values' will save the family structure of the human race. Islam gives well balanced rights to women that are conducive to their modesty and ability to raise families, while providing for their other needs and endeavors, at the same time. The false emancipation of women in the Western society has played havoc with the family structure in the West and most Western societies are unable to maintain their populations without immigration. But such artificial measures can go so far and will fall on deaf ears. The real solution lies in following the 'family values' of Islam that are visible in many successful Muslim families in the West. I conclude by providing some online references for the Islamic teaching of chastity.<sup>5 6 7 8</sup>



gions. This was published in winter volume of *The Muslim Sunrise* in 2007.

### Epilogue

A tsunami of agnosticism and atheism is taking over Europe and Americas. Churches are empty and even those who visit are from older generations. Today, women have been degraded into a mere instrument of sexual indulgence. Society has taught them from early childhood that their physical looks are their main asset. They are sexually harassed at work places. A society where teenage pregnancies are on rise; rape, youth suicides and runaways are on the rise. Adultery, divorce and broken homes are very common. Every so often we hear of husbands killing their wives so that they do not have to pay alimonies. Islam provided the only logical

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#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup><http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1802/decline-marriage-rise-new-families>

<sup>2</sup><http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1724/sharp-increase-children-with-grandparent-caregivers>

<sup>3</sup>David Blankenhorn. *Fatherless America*. Basic books a division of Harper Collins Publisher. 1995.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/171/1908434.00.html#ixzz1bbM0lBRs>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Philosophy-of-Teachings-of-Islam.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.alislam.org/library/articles/Islam\\_and\\_Chastity-20081201MN.html](http://www.alislam.org/library/articles/Islam_and_Chastity-20081201MN.html)

<sup>7</sup><http://www.alislam.org/library/books/Islamic-Teachings-on-Ideal-Family-Life-0090222MN.pdf>

<sup>8</sup><http://www.alislam.org/topics/marriage/chastity.pdf>

The religion of Islam enables anyone who follows it to reach the pinnacle of spiritual achievement, called *al-nafs al-mutma'innah*, or *the soul at rest*. Like the religions that came before it, Islam prohibits its adherents from certain acts, which lead one away from the Creator. This article will discuss the role of prohibitions in a person's spiritual progress, how abstaining from prohibited acts can benefit an individual and society, and then, by way of example, discuss selected dietary prohibitions in Islam. It will conclude by juxtaposing Christian and Islamic notions of divine prohibitions.

By Humera and Naveed Malik

# Prohibitions in Islam: The Path to Righteousness.



## I. When Savages Become Men

The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> explains in *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* (henceforth *Philosophy*) that abstaining from prohibitions is the first step to progressing from the self that incites to evil, called *al-nafs al-ammaarah*, to the self-reproving state, called *al-nafs al-lawwaamah*. Accordingly, the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> writes:

“The first [method of reform] is that senseless savages should be taught the elementary social values pertaining to eat-

ing, drinking, marriage, etc. They should not go about naked, nor eat carrion, like dogs, nor practice any other type of wildness. This is an elementary stage of the reform of natural conditions of the type that would have to be adopted, for instance, if it is desired to teach a savage from Port Blair, the elementary ways of human behavior.” (1996 ed., p 12)

History bears out that when left to their own devices, humans behave like animals. They engage in cannibalism, rape, incest, murder, female infanticide, alcoholism and many other evils. The Arabs were guilty of many such vices in *Jahiliyya* (the pre-Islamic age of ignorance),

which is why Allah included many basic prohibitions in the Holy Qur'an, in order to—in the words of the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup>—“turn savages into men” (p. 14).

## An Act of Faith

The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> emphasizes that “there is no teaching in the Holy Qur'an which is imposed by compulsion” (p. 14). If one is forced to abstain from an act by others, then one does not receive the spiritual benefit of having chosen to abstain from it of his or her own accord. Rather, when one resists and regulates their

natural impulses through exercising reason, from their own free will, they reach the self-reproving state. This is the distinction that the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> explains, when writing, “*Khalq* connotes physical birth and *Khulq* connotes inner birth” (p. 17).

When a person, for the sake of Allah, resists natural inclinations toward prohibited acts, which if indulged would bring some form of physical or worldly satisfaction, he or she pleases Allah. He or she recognizes that God exists, and that to earn His pleasure they must discard completely these prohibited acts. A new inclination is thus born inside of this person: the desire to please Allah. This desire begins to compete with the lure of prohibited actions – the former results in spiritual benefit, while the latter in some fleeting physical benefit. This battle is waged in the second state, the self-reproving state, where flashes of spiritual bliss motivate a person to avoid un-Islamic acts, though in the beginning, the pull of those acts cause a weak person to slip repeatedly into those actions, despite their partial understanding that these acts are not in the greater good.

This was a description of the role that prohibitions play in just the first step of moral reformation. The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> continues to detail the steps to self-reformation and spiritual progress, and prohibitions are present throughout. The interested reader should consult the chapter entitled “First Question” in *Philosophy* for a fuller discussion.

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## II. Dietary Prohibitions Benefit Individuals and Society

Prohibitions in Islam benefit not just the individual, but society at large. Since it is clear how prohibitions in financial dealings – like gambling, usury and dishonesty – and other spheres of social interaction benefit individual and society alike, we take a brief look at how even dietary prohibitions carry the same dual reward.

In *Philosophy*, the Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> explains that one’s diet affects his or her spirituality. In many ways, his discussion can be summarized by the old adage, “You are what you eat.” He writes, “All our natu-

***The swine is known to be a very filthy animal, whose actions include eating its own filth. When considering “you are what you eat,” it becomes obvious that the flesh of swine by the law of nature “would have a foul effect on the body and the soul of the person who eats it.” As a swine is a shameless animal, eating the flesh of this animal leads to shamelessness, and damages the faculty of modesty.***

ral actions like eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, moving about, resting, bathing etc., affect our spiritual condition” (p. 5).

The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> goes on to explain that people who refrain from eating meat “suffer a decline of the faculty of bravery.” Likewise, those people who eat a diet made up mainly of meat and eat very little greens tend to suffer a decline in the faculty of humility.

While diet is an individual level action, this behavior can expand to entire societies and become a part of their culture, which contributes to the national character of a people. Statistics show that people in wealthy nations tend to overeat, and thus suffer from laziness, lust, and chronic health problems like obesity, diabetes and heart disease at rates higher than those in poorer countries.

How does Islam deal with diet? As with most matters in Islam, with regards to diet, taking the middle ground is considered best.

The Holy Qur'an states, “eat and drink but do not be immoderate” (7:32). Moreover, certain foods and drinks, deemed to have such a foul effect on the body and soul of its consumer, have been prohibited to Muslims. These foods and drinks include pork and alcohol.

The swine is known to be a very filthy animal, whose actions include eating its own filth. When considering “you are what you eat,” it becomes obvious that the flesh of swine by the law of nature “would have a foul effect on the body and the soul of the person who eats it.” As a swine is a shameless animal, eating the flesh of this animal leads to shamelessness, and damages the faculty of modesty.

As far as alcohol is considered, there is no doubt that its consumption results in a removal of inhibitions, and contributes to violence, accidents and assaults of all manners. This removal of inhibitions not only affects the soul of the person in-

dulging in it, but through their actions, which can include domestic violence, child abuse, incest and rape, it can have dire consequences for the innocent people surrounding them.

Abiding by these prohibitions and other dietary guidelines, make for healthy individuals who do not overeat, who keep their senses by not drinking alcohol, maintain the ability to work and focus on God, as opposed to baser inclinations and laziness that comes from gluttony.

In perhaps the most well-known dietary prohibition in Islam, able-bodied adults are prohibited from eating or drinking anything during the daytime in the month of *Ramadaan*. While eating and drinking would certainly bring one pleasure, and fill a physical need for sustenance, the fact that Muslims abstain from both acts pleases Allah, Who rewards them with spiritual and worldly blessings. Hunger reminds fasters of the needy, motivating them to increase their charity, which stretches across national boundaries; it increases their appreciation for Allah's attribute of *al-Razzaaq*, or *the Provider of Sustenance*. Fasting becomes a means of attaining forgiveness from, and nearness to Allah. Moreover, modern science shows that fasting in this manner is highly beneficial for our physical health.

## Christianity and Islam on Prohibitions: A Comparative Perspective

Whereas abiding by prohibitions is the path to righteousness in Islam, the Christian doctrine dubs the law "a curse," allowing its adherents to indulge in all manners of excess and yet attain salvation, only for having accepted Jesus<sup>as</sup> as their savior. This doctrine was actually propagated by St. Paul and has nothing to do with the true teachings of Jesus<sup>as</sup> son of Mary, who came to "fulfill the law." This misguided belief has led to the prevalence of many social ills today, including, but not limited to, sexual immorality (consider the alarmingly high rates of rape, abortion, adultery, fornication and divorce) and financial misdealing (consider the

**When divine prohibitions are cast aside, and fear of God vanishes from the hearts of the people, it is only natural that they will seek to break the law of the land whenever they have an opportunity as well. Sadly, man has again taken on the character of the savage. In this age, God has sent a global reformer in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>, founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, to reunite mankind with its Creator.**

subprime lending disaster and subsequent economic crisis). When divine prohibitions are cast aside, and fear of God vanishes from the hearts of the people, it is only natural that they will seek to break the law of the land whenever they have an opportunity as well. Sadly, man has again taken on the character of the savage.

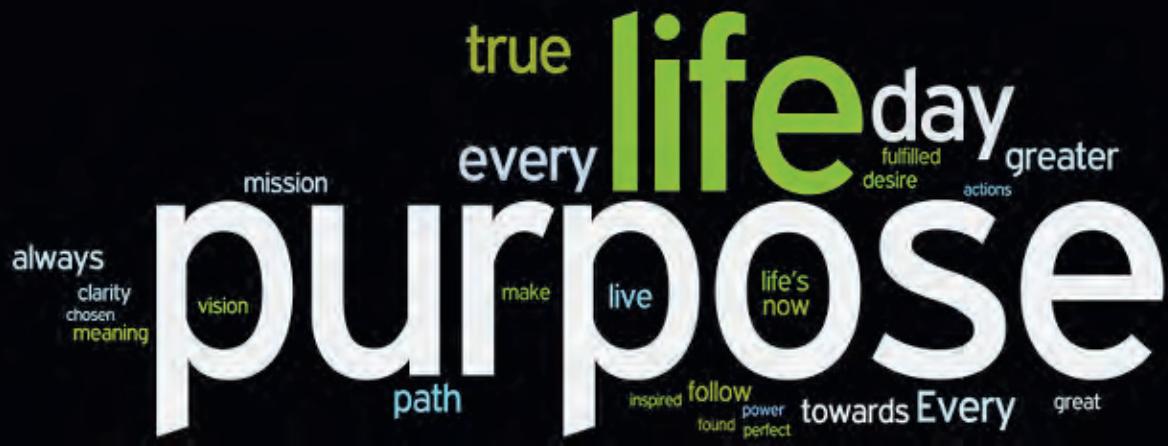
In this age, God has sent a global reformer in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>, founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, to reunite mankind with its Creator. In expositions like *Philosophy* he has taught mankind how to once again transform savagery into humanity.

Ahmadi Muslims have earned the distinction of being peaceful, law-abiding and loyal citizens in every country in which they abide, while also following the pristine teachings of Islam. As a result, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is free from the problems in both Western society and the Muslim world. Their recourse is not to violence but to prayer. They seek the pleasure of God, not of this world. As a result, they have a living relationship with the Creator, and are at peace, working constructively to make themselves and the world around them a better place.

## Enjoin Good and Forbid Evil

In closing, it is important to mention that abstaining from evil is just one side of the coin of moral reformation – doing good being the other. The Promised Messiah<sup>as</sup> writes, "moral qualities fall under two heads. First, those moral qualities that enable a person to discard evil; and, secondly, those moral qualities that enable him to do good" (p. 25). Whereas this article has focused on prohibitions only—and even then on just a part of its role in moral development—*The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* addresses every aspect of moral development, and should be read thoroughly and repeatedly. ♦

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# Purpose of our Existence

Major World Religions' Perspectives

*By Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B.*

**Why do we exist?** What is the purpose of human life, and how can we achieve it? These are perplexing questions that require satisfactory answers, and throughout the centuries philosophers, scientists as well as theologians have attempted to provide the responses. Keeping aside the rationalistic theories of various world renowned philosophers, or scientific explanations, the answers provided by some major world religions to these vitally important questions are worthy of review.

## Hinduism:

**A**lmost four thousand years ago, the Hindu scripture, the Vedas were being orally passed on in India, generation to generation, and later the Upanishads were compiled by Hindu sages. Rituals and practical guidance was given to Hindus to help them pursue various goals in life. According to the Hindu teachings the emphasis on achieving the purpose of life appears to change with the advancing years of an individual, or according to the caste in which one is born. Acquiring knowledge should start from early childhood; bodily pleasures are to be enjoyed in youth; and making money should be the goal in mature years. However, the ultimate objective of one's life is to achieve enlightenment – *Moksha*. The purpose of life is self-realization: to find God within. The final goal is to be liberated from ignorance and sinful worldly desires and to unite with God, and to see God in each and every thing. Hinduism teaches to dissolve oneself in the love of God through meditation and remaining focused on God. As it is not easy to remain focused on an Unseen God, therefore Hinduism depicts God's innumerable powers and attributes reflecting them in concrete forms in thousands of images of deities. The innumerable deities have their own legendary stories. These different images of God make it simpler and easier for humans to remain focused on a specific goal that one may want to achieve in life. However, the purpose of life is ultimately attained through total self-realization – that God is within you, and you are God – being one with God through immeasurable love. To achieve *Moksha*, one also has to serve others compassionately and selflessly. However, there are always hindrances in the way of receiving *Moksha*. It is difficult to remain faultless, and to avoid harming others. As the final purpose of life is not easy to achieve in one life cycle, one has to pass through many rebirths. In this process to get rid of the weaknesses and mistakes committed in a previous life cycle, the human soul transmigrates

through lower animal forms, even insects. That is God's way to cleanse the soul of His devotee of the sins committed in his or her life. Thus through the cycle of reincarnation one attains perfect *Moksha*.

## Jainism:

**I**n Jainism, another ancient religion that flourished in India, the purpose of life is to attain divine consciousness by shedding the worldly bonds and getting rid of past sins, and coming out of the cycle of births and deaths. The divine spiritual qualities are dormant in each individual human being, and the goal of religion is to awaken them. This state is called *Nirvana*. Mahavira (599-527 BCE), was the twenty fourth and final reincarnation of a Jain spiritual reformer, who formulized the Jain thoughts and actions. He was born a prince, but became an ascetic by renouncing the kingdom and his royal family; so much so that he did not wear any clothes. Along with relinquishing worldly ties, one has to be harmless and kind to others including animals and insects. Jains practice complete non-violence (*Ahimsa*) towards all living beings, believing that all living beings have souls. Jain monks and nuns practice celibacy, and have no personal property or possessions. For others, if one has household belongings, the Jain teaching emphasizes that the heart should remain detached, considering worldly possessions as a mere 'trust' that would be handed over to others. To attain life's purpose, *Nirvana*, there are three vital ingredients: right vision, right knowledge, and right conduct. Thoughts and motives must be pure. One has to have correct knowledge of how to move forward on the spiritual journey. His or her wisdom and righteousness has to reflect in benevolent actions towards all living souls. Once a soul attains divine consciousness, it experiences limitless power of perception, knowledge and self-control – resulting in infinite bliss.

## Buddhism:

**S**iddharta, later known as the Mahatama Buddha (563-483 BCE), also was a born prince who relinquished the comforts of his palace

and married life, and went out in the world to understand the nature of human sufferings and how to overcome them. His search was to find ways to remove the pain and grief that comes through old-age, sickness and death. The purpose of life, according to his teachings is to eliminate suffering and sorrow by bringing a change from within. According to Buddhism, the root cause of all our sufferings is that we desire for worldly possessions that do not give everlasting happiness, their effects being transitory. Remaining mentally and emotionally detached to worldliness lessens the suffering when we lose material possessions or close relations. Meditation, yoga and some prescribed rituals are helpful tools to attain this goal of life. One has to avoid two opposite extremes – life of pleasure and life of hunger. To escape suffering permanently, Buddhism teaches to follow the noble eightfold path: right knowledge; right intention; right speech; right action; right livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; and right concentration. Obviously according to the Buddhist view, the term "right" means "true" and "correct". Every man and women has the potential to become a Buddha – the enlightened one. It may not be possible in one life cycle, but it can be achieved through ongoing reincarnations of the soul.

## Zoroastrianism:

**I**n Iran, approximately 3500 years ago, Zoroaster taught Mazdaism (also known as Zoroastrianism). According to this religion, Azhura Mazda (the Wise Lord) is the transcendent Creator of the spiritual heaven and the material world. He is the highest God worthy of worship, but has an adversary demonic force called Ahriman or Angra Mainyu which embodies all the evil that exists. Azhura Mazda is the Lord of Truth and Order, while Ahriman is the master of falsehood and destruction. Thus, life is a constant struggle between the bounteous principle and the chaotic forces. The purpose of our existence, according to the Mazdaism or Zoroastrianism is to achieve happiness by staying on the side of Truth and Order, rejecting what is false and disorderly. This purpose can be achieved by the use

of our free will, utilizing good thoughts, good speech and good actions. In the end, goodness shall prevail over evil.

## Judaism:

**G**od created man in His image, says the Torah, and put him in the Garden of Eden so that he may obey Him in all his actions. In Judaism, to serve One God, to keep His awe and love in one's heart is the purpose of life. To live an elevated and God-fearing life on the earth is the ultimate goal. “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*” is the fundamental commandment in the Torah – the sacred scripture of Judaism. One of the wisest Jewish leaders, King Solomon, is recorded to have written: “*Ultimately, all is known, fear God, and observe His commandments, for this is the whole purpose of man*” (Book of Ecclesiastes 12: 13). This clearly defined purpose of life is to be kept in hearts, talked about all the time, and conveyed to the coming generations. To be created in the image of God also gave humans the authority to rule over the earth: “*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful; and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and every living thing that moves on the earth*” (Genesis 1:28). Man completely fulfils the purpose of his existence when he shuns worship of anything else but One God, responds to His commandments in awe, reverence and wonder, and serves Him most sincerely. This belief is to be constantly transformed into action. According to Judaism, achieving this purpose will reach its climax when the awaited Messiah shall appear on the earth.

## Christianity:

**J**esus was a born Jew, and responding to the question what was the greatest commandment in the Law of Moses he summed up the Jewish teachings, saying: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.*” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it:

‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22: 34-40). Thus, love of God and love for humanity is the sole purpose of life according to Jesus. Later, his followers who started to believe that God had sent His only begotten son, Jesus, to be sacrificed to save mankind from the bondage of sin, promoted the theological doctrine that the very purpose of life was to gain salvation, that is, the deliverance of man's soul from the power or penalty of sin. “*Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!*” (Revelation 7:10). The New Testament claims that in order to attain eternal life, one must place one's faith in Jesus, who is the Christ, the son of God, and who was sent by God for this very purpose. Christianity puts great emphasis on the concept of ‘Original sin’ that was committed by Adam and Eve under the influence of the Satan. The consequences of that sin were death and eternal damnation. Since then, no child is born without the taint of sin – a state that resulted from the Fall of Man. In his attempt to explain why Jesus died on the cross and became accursed, St. Paul made this doctrine an integral part of his teachings! However, salvation cannot be gained just by doing good works; one has to have faith and only then the grace of God helps man to achieve the purpose of his life. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not the result of works, that no one should boast*” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

## Islam:

**I**n the Holy Scripture of Islam, the Qur'an, God says: “I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me” (Sura Adh-Dhariyat 51: 57). The Arabic term for ‘to worship’ designates “to know, to love and to serve.” In connection with worship of God, the Holy Quran instructs the believers in these words: “*Adopt the hues (the attributes) of God! And who is fairer than God's hues (and attributes)? Him alone do we worship*” (Sura Al-Baqarah 2: 139). Thus the ultimate purpose of life is complete devotion to God, the Creator of the material and the

spiritual worlds. It is to subdue one's egotistic inclinations to His supreme will by obeying all His commandments. Human faculties need to be fully utilized in realizing God's presence, His love and mercy, and to serve others by reflecting on His attributes. The Qur'an explains many of the attributes of God in detail, and shows the way how to serve Him and His creation in the best way in accordance with human nature. It is by reflecting God's magnificent attributes upon one's heart that the way to God's worship opens up. God loves His creation, and He is Merciful, Just, Forgiving, Creative, Benevolent and Wise. Thus, His “worship” can best be offered by being a loving and compassionate human while serving others in creative, benevolent ways.

To achieve this objective, some of the means are: to have the right knowledge of God's existence; to fully appreciate God's Unity, Glory and Beauty; to recognise God's unlimited benevolence; to strive hard and be willing to make sacrifices in His way; to supplicate Him with full conviction that He responds to prayers; to remain patient and steadfast; staying resolute under trials and tribulations; and by keeping company with the righteous and the truthful.

### To achieve the purpose of life,

Islam does not ask anyone to become an ascetic, or to believe in the process of reincarnation, or to believe in any redemptive sacrifice made by some one else. The devotee has to keep his or her heart detached from worldly possessions and self-centered desires, and restrain from harming others under any impulse or passion. One has to give up pride and vanity, and pass life in humbleness, forbearance and cheerfulness. To worship the One God in the true sense, one has to remain occupied in the service of His creatures by using all human faculties to the best of one's ability. The joy of such worship of God can be felt in this very life and it paves the way for higher manifestation of eternal joy and comfort in the Hereafter.♦

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**Abu Dharr relates that some people said to the Holy Prophet: The wealthy walk away with a great deal of merit. They pray as we pray and fast as we fast, but then they are able to give away in charity of their spare wealth. He said: “Has not Allah endowed you with that which you can employ charity? All glorification of Allah is charity, all Praise of Allah is charity, all affirmation of Allah’s Unity is charity, all affirmation of Allah’s Greatness is charity, enjoying good is charity, forbidding evil is charity, consorting with your wives is charity.” They asked: Messenger of Allah, is it that one of us should satisfy his urge and he would be rewarded? He said: “If he satisfied his urge unlawfully would it not be sinful?” Thus when he satisfies it lawfully it is meritorious. (Muslim)**

# Q&A

## Q. What is the impact of the soul and the body on each other?

**A.** As the soul is affected by physical conduct, in the same way sometimes the soul affects the body. For instance, when a person experiences sorrow his eyes become wet, and a person who feels happy, smiles. All our natural actions like eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, moving about, resting, bathing etc., affect our spiritual condition. Our physical structure is related intimately to our total humanity. If a certain part of the brain is injured memory is immediately lost. An injury to another part of the brain causes loss of consciousness. Poisonous air affects the body and through it the mind, and the whole inner system, to which the moral impulses are related, is impaired and the unfortunate victim passes out quickly like a madman. Thus physical injuries disclose that there is a mysterious relationship between the soul and the body which is beyond the ken of man. Reflection shows that the body is the mother of the soul. The soul does not descend from outside into the womb of a pregnant woman. It is a light that is inherent in the sperm which begins to shine forth with the development of the embryo. The Word of God Almighty conveys to us that the soul becomes manifest from the framework that is prepared in the womb from the sperm, as is said in the Holy Quran: Then We develop it into a new creation. So blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators (23:15).

In old age a person arrives at a stage in which, after having acquired much knowledge he loses it all. (22:6) All this observation of ours is proof enough that the soul without the body amounts to nothing. This is reinforced by the thought that if the soul without the body had amounted to anything, it would have been without purpose for God Almighty to set up a relationship between it and a mortal body. Further it is worthy of note that God Almighty has created man for limitless progress. Then if the soul is not able to achieve the progress possible in this brief life without the companionship of the body. How can we expect that it would be able, by itself, without the companionship of the body, achieve limitless progress in the hereafter.

All this shows that according to Islamic principles, for the soul to act perfectly it is necessary for it to enjoy the companionship of a body at all times.

## Q. When does one achieve a spiritual condition?

**A.** Spirituality can be achieved only through the use of every moral quality in its proper place and on its proper occasion, and through treading faithfully upon the ways of God and through being wholly devoted to Him.

## Q. How can the physical, moral and spiritual conditions of man be reformed?

**A.** According to the Holy Quran the natural state of man has a very strong relationship with his moral and spiritual states, so much so that even a person's manner of eating and drinking affects his moral and spiritual states. If the natural state of a person is subjected to the control of the directions of divine law it becomes his moral state and deeply affects his spirituality, as is said that whatever falls into a salt mine is converted into salt. That is why the Holy Quran has laid stress on physical cleanliness and postures, and their regulation in relation to all worship and inner purity and spiritual humility.

As indicated in the Holy Word of God Almighty, the natural state of man, the fountain head of which is the self that incites to evil, is not something divorced from his moral state.

The Holy Word of God has classified man's natural faculties and desires and urges, as natural conditions. These, when they are consciously regulated and controlled and are brought into action on their proper occasions and places, become moral qualities.

In the same way, moral conditions are not entirely distinct from spiritual conditions. When moral conditions develop absolute devotion to God and complete purification of self and, cutting asunder from the world, turn wholly to God and to perfect love and complete devotion and full serenity and satisfaction and complete accord with the divine will, they become spiritual conditions.

## Q. How does the Holy Quran take the human being step by step to the highest spiritual level?

**A.** Reflection on the Holy Word of God discloses that it lays down rules for the re-

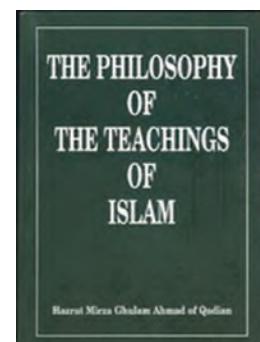
form of the natural condition of man and then lifts him gradually upwards and desires to raise him to the highest spiritual state. First, God desires to teach man the rules of social behaviour like sitting, standing, eating, drinking, talking etc., and thus to deliver him from a state of barbarism and distinguish him from the animals and thus bestow upon him an elementary moral state which might be described as social culture. He then desires to regulate his elementary moral habits so that they should acquire the character of high moral qualities. Both of these methods are part of the same process as they are related to the reform of man's natural condition. There is between them a difference only of degree. The All-Wise One has so arranged the moral system that man should be able to rise from a low to a high moral condition.

## Q. What are the three means of reforming humanity?

**A.** The first is that senseless savages should be taught the elementary social values pertaining to eating, drinking, marriage etc. They should not go about naked nor eat carrion, like dogs, nor practise any other type of wildness. This is an elementary stage of the reform of natural conditions of the type that would have to be adopted, for instance, if it is desired to teach a savage from Port Blair, the elementary ways of human behaviour.

The second method of reform is that when a person has adopted elementary human ways, he may be taught the higher moral qualities and should be instructed to employ his faculties in their proper places and on their proper occasions.

The third method of reform is that those who have acquired high moral qualities should be given a taste of the draught of the love of and union with God.



For further discussion on these topics go to [Alislam.org](http://Alislam.org). Search under library for the book, "The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam."

*Thy boundless blessings of peace  
Be upon Mustafa, O God;  
Verily through him we receive Thy Light.*

*My soul is eternally bonded  
To the soul of Muhammad,  
I made my heart drink deep,  
Of the brimful cup of his love.*

*It was because of you that we  
Became the best of all the peoples,  
O Prophet of God who  
Is the best of all the prophets.  
As you marched ahead of all the rest,  
We too stepped forward.*

*Let alone the human beings,  
Even all the angels in the Heavens  
Follow suit and join me,  
As I sing thy praise.*

# Book Review

## Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures

By Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI.

Introduction by Marcello Pera

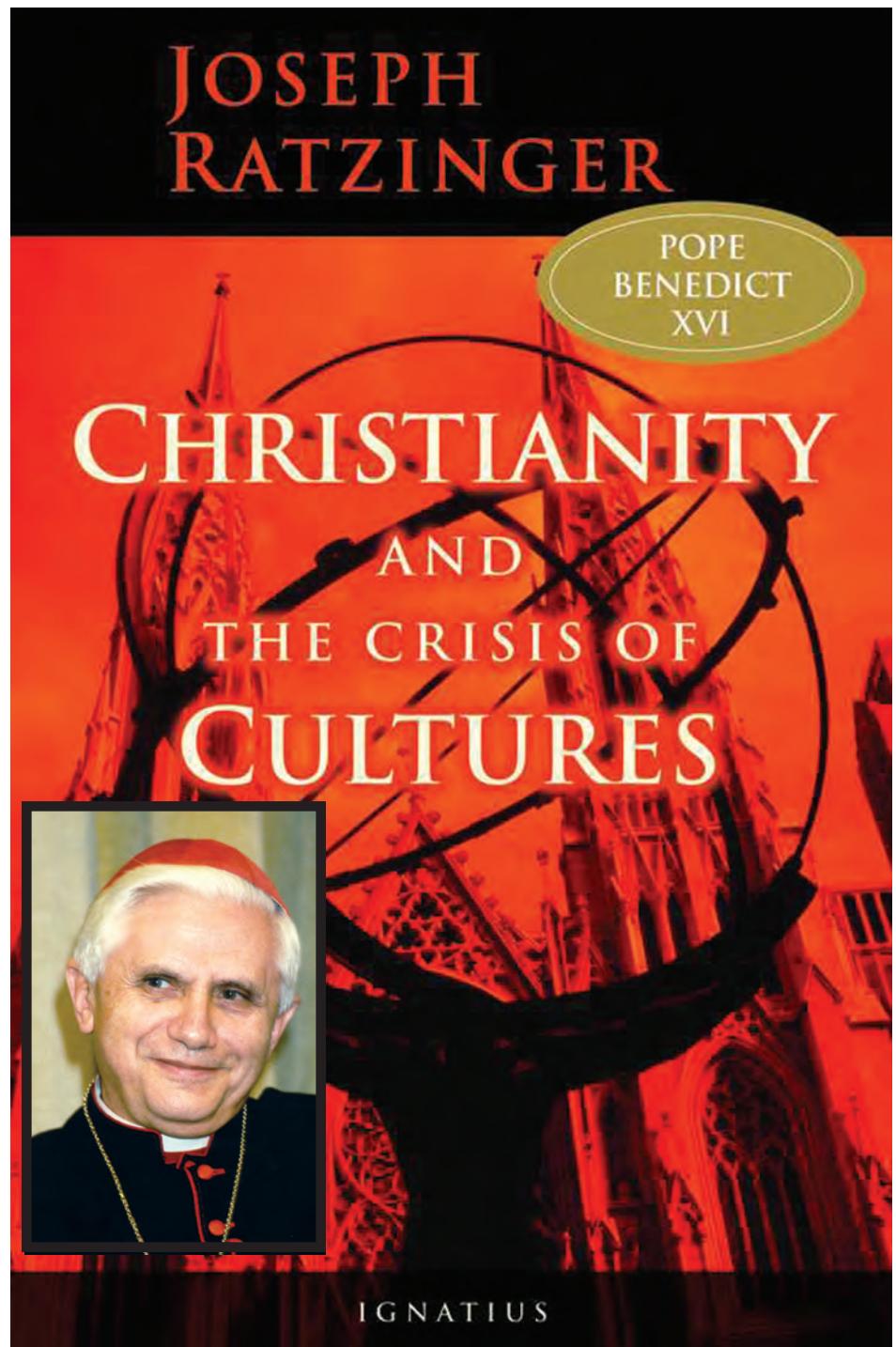
Reviewed by Shazia Sohail

*“Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures” was a lecture delivered by Cardinal Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, in 2005 at the School of Catholic Culture, in Italy.*

**H**e proposes a three step approach to solving what he believes is the greatest immorality in the European culture: abortion. First, he makes the argument that the crisis of cultures does not comprise the clash between one religion and another, or one continent and another; rather it is the clash between religious and moral truths on the one hand and the secular or Enlightenment culture, based on a scientific attitude, on the other. He offers agnosticism as a solution.

Next, he makes an elaborate case to prove the moral bankruptcy of the Enlightenment culture, the most obvious symptom being the murder of the weakest of the weak, the unborn child. In the final chapter, he contradicts himself and rejects agnosticism as a viable option and invites the audience to choose faith and God with the totality of their beings.

In the foreword, titled A Proposal That Should Be Accepted, Marcello Pera admits that the cultural break from Christianity occurred due to acceptance of Galileo’s proposal that the spheres of science and religion should never be allowed to influence each other since the Bible clearly contradicted scientific truths; the resulting gap continued to widen to the point that morality came to be replaced by the universally accepted values of personal liberty and freedom of expression. In deference to Kant, no action was considered good or bad in itself; the consequences that ensued from it determined its value. At some point the statement in Genesis man was made in the image of God was transformed into human rights. But when other advances joined this one like scientific freedom, autonomy of technology, and women’s self-determination, it created difficult problems. Pera closes the introduction with a powerful appeal to accept the Pope’s proposal



to embrace agnosticism to resolve the moral dilemma posed by such issues.

In the opinion of the Pope the greatest failure of the modern society pursuant to its break from Christianity is the recognition of a woman’s right to choose abortion for herself. He does not tell us why the unborn child, even if it is illegitimate and the result of rape or

incest, must be born. Why are the rights of a potential person more valuable than those of a woman? How did he deduce from Genesis that a fetus, even in the earliest stages of its development, is a person? If something cannot exist or live on its own how can it be called a life and have rights? Why must the state enforce Christian values if the church has failed to teach it to its own

followers? Why must non-Christians living in a Christian state be forced to practice the Christian doctrine of the 'right to life?' The author does not answer these questions but tries to convince us that if we just lived our lives as if God existed, even if we didn't believe it, and imposed Christian values on ourselves we would come to believe that He does indeed exist. He does not even consider that there are many people who believe in the existence of God but don't believe that life starts at conception. There is no recognition of the complexity of this issue.

The author then goes, with some detail, into the subconscious reasons for, and the psychological impact of, abortion. The refusal of the pregnant woman to 'see' the face of the unborn child, because it makes demands on her liberty, later leads to unresolved feelings of guilt. He appeals that we must fight for the right of the fetus because it is the weakest of the weak - much like Jesus Christ was when he was crucified. He asserts that Man should not be treated like a thing because he has personality; and that this is a concept that could only be grasped in the context of morality. Morality breathes in a religious environment; therefore, only Christianity can restore the dignity of man and respect for life.

If I was a Christian woman reading this book I would find it difficult to accept Pope Benedict XVI as my holy father. Even if I was a committed pro-life woman I would expect a man of his stature to address the issue of abortion as being symptomatic of a wider social malaise and not just that of the liberation and self-determination of the western woman. I would have expected him to chastise men for putting women in a position where they had to make such a terrible choice. I would have expected my holy father to show some sympathy for a rape victim who might find herself pregnant – rather I would have expected him to censure the rapist and left the victim alone. Better still, I would have expected him to render constructive advice whereby women could protect themselves from such a horrific fate. At the least he could have mentioned the words modesty, chastity, and celibacy, for both men and women, as potential solutions to a wide array of issues instead of expecting women to bear the entire cost of sexual permissiveness in the western society.

Despite that both the Pope and Marcello Pera agree that civil liberties came to be the norm in the West only after its break from Christianity, the author is making a series of circular arguments that go something like this: Europe was Christian - Europe could not make scientific progress - It broke away from Christianity and developed a secular ideology called Enlightenment - Enlightenment culture is good because it establishes human rights - Enlightenment culture is imperfect because it takes away the power of the church to take away some of these human rights - Enlightenment culture is not universal because it arose from Christianity and can only flourish in Christian lands - Even though Enlightenment culture clashes with Christianity and is more good than bad, it is not as good as Christianity whose biggest achievement is that it gave rise to a culture that can only survive if it makes a complete break from Christianity - The best example of the failure of the Enlightenment culture is that it fails to protect the rights of an unborn child, the right of the church to reject homosexuality, and the right of the church to discriminate against women - The church cannot get people to remain Christian within the framework of the Enlightenment culture - Europeans must behave as if they believe in God, even if they don't - Europe must become Christian again.

It is surprising that the Pope does not invite people to embrace Christianity, or faith in God, but proposes the adoption of agnosticism, with the caveat that once a Christian lifestyle is embraced then God will inevitably put faith in people's hearts. In his opinion agnosticism is the demand of humility and honesty; since neither the existence nor the non-existence of God can be proved one should live as if God did indeed exist. In his opinion it is arrogant to say that God does not exist because it could never be proved scientifically. This is the weakest argument one could ever come across regarding the existence of God. Should one believe in all supernormal phenomena because science cannot disprove their existence? He is proposing that even if Europeans do not believe in the existence of God they should structure their lives in such a way as if God did exist because secular morality is not providing mankind with solutions to all its problems, overlooking the

fact that belief in the Christian faith provided even less solutions. And, whichever way you look at it, this proposal would appear to be an upside-down way of doing things that is against human nature.

The perusal of this book makes it blatantly obvious that scientific discoveries have made loyalty to the Christian faith increasingly difficult. One should not have to choose between the public and objective scientific knowledge, and private and subjective religious belief; between truths of faith and truths of science. It also does not behoove the Pope to defer to philosophers like Kant and Pascal and preach agnosticism. It would have been better if he had said that God could only be found through pious conduct so one should progressively do righteous deeds to find Him, and offered some encouragement that it is indeed possible to ascertain God's existence. The only case he makes for the existence of God is that Jesus Christ told us so; just as one would take medicine at the behest of a pharmacist, one should take Jesus' word for the fact that God does indeed exist. One is left feeling that a man of his stature should have been able to offer more eloquent persuasion than this.

For a Muslim it is almost painful to watch the Pope trying to offer simple solutions to intricate problems. Europe has tasted the fruit of intellectual honesty and it is not possible for it to unlearn or overlook the scientific inconsistencies of the Bible. Only a religion that can offer complete harmony between revealed scripture and science would be worth its consideration now. Moral values would be much more palatable coming from a holy book that is in perfect accord with nature, and offers scientific information, unknown to man at the time of its revelation, as proof of its veracity. Fortunately for humanity, the Holy Qur'an meets this test; it not only provides glimpses into the intricate workings of the physical universe but also repeatedly invites the reader to reflect upon natural phenomenon to attain a better understanding of God Almighty. ♦

*Shazia Sohail is a staff writer for the Muslim Sunrise.*

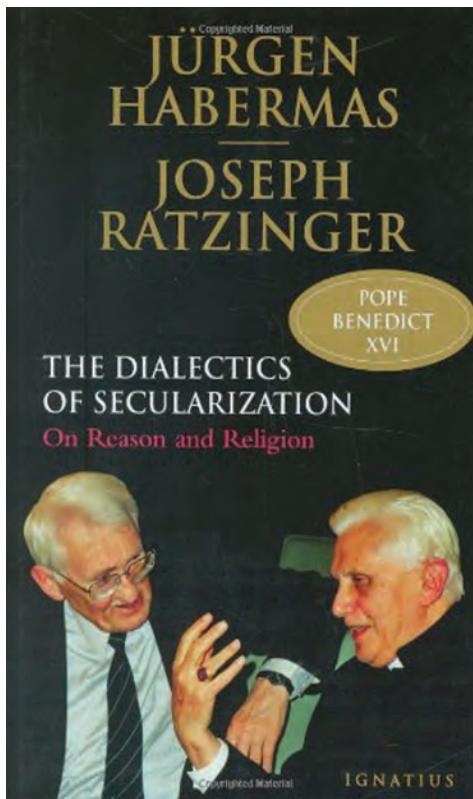
# Seeking Ethical Foundations in A Pluralistic World

Book Review by Atif Munawar Mir of the book "The Dialectics of Secularization"

**W**hat should be the main source of morality and law in a pluralistic world? In pre-modern times, religion was the source of morality and law. The members and leaders of religious societies would consult scriptures when formulating laws and making moral decisions. The rise of modernity replaced scripture with science and reason. The principles of free market economy, and freedom and equality, as conceived by the western world, became the guiding principles of society. In an increasingly pluralistic world, however, new principles of morality and law are needed that can also accommodate the non-western world views. In their book "The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion", Habermas and Pope Benedict XVI discuss what should be the main source of morality and law in a pluralistic world. They conclude that in today's world, reason and religion must play a complementary role not a competing one, in order to develop both a universal moral standard and an ethical code of law. According to Jurgen Habermas, religious traditions, which had arguably retreated in the face of modernity, have assumed importance once again. Why? Religious traditions, as per Habermas, can help strengthen the faltering unity of secular democracies.<sup>2</sup>

## THE POPE'S ANALYSIS OF THE LIMITATIONS OF REASON AND RELIGION IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL PLURALISM

In the Pope's understanding, religion, however, has to be more than just a source of solidarity in secular democracies. The Pope states that increased global interdependence and the destructive power of science have made the need of globally accepted legal and ethical controls over human power absolutely necessary.<sup>3</sup> The Pope emphasizes that science has failed to be a source of global ethics.<sup>4</sup> Science has given us atomic bombs and other



inventions that are potentially fatal for the future of humanity.<sup>5</sup> The Pope has limited faith in democracy as well since democracy expresses the will of the majority and does not necessarily guarantee the freedom of or justice for the minority. As such, democracy cannot be trusted to provide the ethical foundations of law.<sup>6</sup> The Pope also acknowledges that major world religions do not have a perfect report card. Evidence of this is the fanaticism that plagues the world. Which is why, according to the Pope, both reason and religion are needed for humanity's moral and ethical success, as both may purify each other and guide one another.<sup>7</sup>

The Pope also stresses the need for all major religions of the world to participate in this purification, on the condition that they treat reason and faith as complementary to each other "so that a universal process of purifications (in the plural!) can proceed."<sup>8</sup>

He acknowledges, however, that the "rational or ethical or religious formula that would embrace the whole world and unite all persons does not exist; or, at least, it is unattainable at the present moment. This is why the so-called world ethos remains an abstraction".<sup>9</sup> With this acknowledgement, he agrees with Habermas' remarks that in a "post-secular society," science and all major religions should recognize "self-limitations" and show a "willingness to learn from each other."<sup>10</sup>

## CONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE OF THE POPE'S COMMENTS FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

The Pope has performed an insightful analysis of reason and revelation in an age of global pluralism. His analysis, however, was based on three fundamental assumptions that a follower of Islamic faith would disagree with:

The three fundamental assumptions made by the Pope in his analysis are:

- Islam and other religions did not come from the same God
- Religion can only be purified by reason not by religion itself
- Reason and religion are not naturally complementary to each other

### Assumption 1: Islam and other religions did not come from the same God

According to Islam, the source of *all* world religions is the one God i.e. Allah. The Holy Qur'an tells the stories of Adam<sup>as</sup>, Noah<sup>as</sup>, Moses<sup>as</sup>, Jesus<sup>as</sup>, Jacob<sup>as</sup> and many other prophets<sup>as</sup> who were sent by God to provide guidance to mankind.

*Say ye: 'We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to all other prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves.'* (2:137)

It is for this reason that Islam does not claim that the believers of the Islamic faith have a monopoly on salvation. The Holy Qur'an says:

*Surely, the believers, and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians — whichever party from among these truly believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds — shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.* (2:63)

According to the Islamic tradition, God has sent more than 124,000 prophets. Allah sent the prophets to various tribes according to their moral standing and needs. On other occasions, when the message of one prophet becomes diluted, distorted or forgotten, Allah revived the message by sending a new prophet. The new message revives the essence of the old message while reflecting the new realities of the world.

Similarly, Muslims believe that Islam is a continuation of the teachings of Christianity,

Judaism and other previous religions while incorporating new realities of the world. As such, Islam ultimately advocates freedom of conscience because as already mentioned in the Quranic verse above that God is the ultimate judge of good deeds. The Holy Qur'an also says:

*There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong... (2:257)*

Thus, Islamic teachings are very conducive to intercultural and interreligious peace as it establishes freedom of conscience and promises salvation to those who do good deed regardless of faith.

**Assumption 2: Religion can only be purified by reason and not by religion itself**

In his book "The Dialects of Secularization," the Pope shows a strong faith in reason's power to purify religion. He says:

*"We have seen that there exist pathologies in religion that are extremely dangerous and that make it necessary to see the divine light of reason as a controlling organ. Religion must continually itself to purified and structured by reason; and this was the view of Church Fathers, too."<sup>11</sup>*

The Pope is right to believe that reason can serve as an instrument that can help us discover the true teachings of religion but the reality is that, it is God's job to purify distorted religious teachings by sending new prophets. Religion does not necessarily need reason for its purification; it can be purified by another religion as well. All religions came to purify some other religion and Islam is no different.

The Pope is right when he observes that fanaticism has crept into religion. As an example, he mentions Osama Bin Laden. Granted that fanaticism has found its way into Islam, such fanaticism, however, does not reflect the original teachings of Islam but represents the misguided faith of Muslims. That is why God had promised the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> that such fanaticism will be purified with the coming of the Promised Messiah, and this Messiah, Ahmadi Muslims believe, appeared in India more than 100 years ago. His name was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> and he founded the Ahmadiyya

## **The Pope is right to believe that reason can serve as an instrument that can help us discover the true teachings of religion but the reality is that, it is God's job to purify distorted religious teachings by sending new prophets.**

Movement in Islam. He reinforced the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> by declaring compassion to be a key ingredient of Islam and taught Muslims to show compassion to everyone regardless of his/her faith, embrace a pluralistic society, and show gratitude to those who treat them with justice.

Thus, the process of purification is the responsibility of God. The source of true purification is divine revelation, not human reason.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> writes:

*"... the recognition of God began through revelation and the revival of the understanding of the Divine has always taken place through revelation...."<sup>12</sup>*

Reason of course must play a role. But it is not the foundation of purity. Rather, reason serves to elaborate upon revelation, and provides insight into it and thus may help us discover the true spirit of religion. But in situations when the spirit of a religion suffocates beneath the forces of tradition and time, further revelation is the only means of true purification.

**Assumption 3: Reason and religion are not naturally complementary to each other**

The Pope also discusses the tension between rationality and faith inherent in all religions. He says:

*Although the secular culture is largely dominated by strict rationality...the Christian understanding of reality continues to be a powerful force. The closeness and the tension between these poles varies: sometimes they are willing to learn from each other, but sometimes they reject each other to a great or lesser degree. The Islamic cultural sphere, too, is marked by similar tensions. There is a broad spectrum between the fanatical absolutism of a Bin Laden and attitudes that are open to a tolerant rationality.<sup>13</sup> <http://knol.google.com/k/atif-mir/seeking-ethical-foundations-in-the/19gdbadabjxd/8-ftn13>*

The Pope claims that a variety of religious viewpoints across the globe are in tension with rationality and therefore finding an ethical system in today's pluralistic world has proven to be a tough exercise. It must be noted, however, that the fundamental principles of science and reason are embedded within Islamic belief.

The Holy Qur'an teaches Muslims a prayer:

*... O my Lord, increase me in knowledge. (20:115)*

The Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said:

*For him who follows a path for seeking knowledge, Allah will ease the way to paradise.<sup>14</sup>*

The Pope is advocating the partnership of reason and religion as a sort of compromise between science and religion. In Islam, the partnership between reason and revelation has existed from the very beginning. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>, based on the teachings of Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>, states:

*"... reason is the light...which draws man towards truth, saves him from a variety of doubts...It is very useful, very necessary and is a great bounty...despite all this, it suffers from the shortcoming that it alone cannot lead to full certainty in...understanding of the reality of things...reason needs a companion...If the operation of reason*

*relates to matters which are metaphysical, which can't be seen by the eye, or heard by the ear, or touched by the hand, nor can they be inquired about through history, then the companion that helps reason is revelation"*

The notion of a dichotomy between Islam and rationality is unfounded. Abbas Poya explains:

*"A discourse in which Sharia is contrasted with rationality, or Islam with reason, as if this involves some element of dichotomy is not to be found in the history of Islamic ideas. This is a modern discourse forced upon Muslims in the post-colonial period as part of the rationalism that predominates everywhere – a rationalism on which the concept of human rights is based."<sup>15</sup>*

In the West, faith in human reason emerged only a few hundred years ago. People became tired of religious wars and realized the power of scientific reason in unlocking the secrets of the natural world. While the West was immersed in the Dark Ages, reason and religion coexisted in the Islamic world. During that time, Muslims not only made prominent contributions to algebra, chemistry, pharmacy, astronomy and philosophy but also laid foundations of tolerant societies where the rights of minorities were respected and protected.. Islamic Spain is a perfect example that reason and revelation coexisted in Islam well before modernity found its way into Europe.

Akbar S.Ahmed, describes:

*"If we define a civilized society as one which encourages religious and ethnic tolerance, free debates, libraries and colleges, public baths and parks, poetry and architecture, then Muslim Spain is a good example. Take the example of a library, always a useful index of civilization. The library of the ruler of Cordoba in the tenth century contained 400,000 volumes – more, it is said, than in all the libraries of Europe at the time."<sup>16</sup>*

Islam encourages intellectual progress. Take the example of *Ijtihad* in Islamic jurisprudence. *Ijtihad* describes the process of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources: the Qur'an and the Sunnah. *Ijtihad* is a perfect example of how reason is integral to Islamic jurisprudence... Abbas Poya explains:

*"... the application of rationality can be observed in all spheres of Sharia law.*

*Behind this practice are the many calls in the Koran and in the tradition for making use of rationality. The Koran repeatedly calls for reflection on nature, history, other traditions, this life and the beyond, personal action and its consequences. In some collections of hadiths there is even a special chapter on rationality and knowledge. Of course, in the Koran and in the hadiths this does not refer to the modern philosophical concept of rationality; this would simply not be possible. The Koran and the tradition are not philosophical texts, and they originated at a time when rationality in the modern sense was not discussed. However, the fact that the texts mention these terms and call for reflection in every respect was important and pointed the way ahead for Muslim practice. That is why there were no inhibitions about applying rationality with respect to Sharia law."<sup>17</sup>*

He continues:

*"...rationality constitutes an important element in the process of reaching legal decisions. In this the term ijihad is of central significance. In consequence, and without entering into hair-splitting about definitions, it can be said that ijihad is the informed application of reason when investigating the Sharia. Pragmatic considerations underlay the practice of ijihad: people knew that new questions constantly arise in both profane and sacred matters – and also that not all these questions can be answered by way of the Koran or the Sunna. So it was thought important and even necessary to allow qualified experts the possibility of reaching new and practical judgements in accordance with new circumstances – in other words, to practice ijihad."<sup>18</sup>*

It is only when Islam is hijacked by radical elements that rationality became subservient to revelation, even though rationality is meant to provide insight into revelation. Islamic scholars closed the doors of *ijihad* and started to rely on the literal word of the Holy Qur'an. Instead of abiding by the tolerant spirit of Islam and understanding the contextual rationale behind Quranic teaching, they manipulate and distort the peaceful and knowledge-friendly beliefs of Islam into violent and oppressive ones.

The Pope treats reason and revelation as mutually exclusive sources of knowledge. In Islam, they have been closely intertwined from the outset.

## CONCLUSION

All in all, the Pope seeks the purification of religion and reason by advocating collaboration of science and all major religions. It is a noble objective and Muslim religious leaders should welcome the Pope's offer. One thing that must be kept in mind is that Islam views itself as a culmination of all other major religions and has always treated reason as a partner of revelation. Moreover, according to Ahmadi Muslims, those Islamic traditions that have lost touch with the original teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> cannot be purified with reason alone but have to be discarded in favor of authentic teachings and traditions. That is the message of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>. Islam, it may be argued, when freed from political manipulations and radical interpretations, is well equipped to substantially contribute to the ethical foundations of law that transcend all faiths. ♦

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Known as Joseph Ratzinger when he wrote the book. In this article, he is referred to as Pope

<sup>2</sup> Habermas, Jurgen & Ratzinger, Joseph, *The Dialects of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2006, p. 42

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p.55

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p. 56

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p. 65

<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p. 60

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 78

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 79

<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p. 76

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p. 77

<sup>11</sup>Ahmad, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam, "Revelation, Inspiration, Vision and Dream " in The Essence of Islam, Vol II, Islam International Publications, Great Britian, 2004, p. 120

<sup>12</sup>Habermas & Ratzinger, p. 73-75

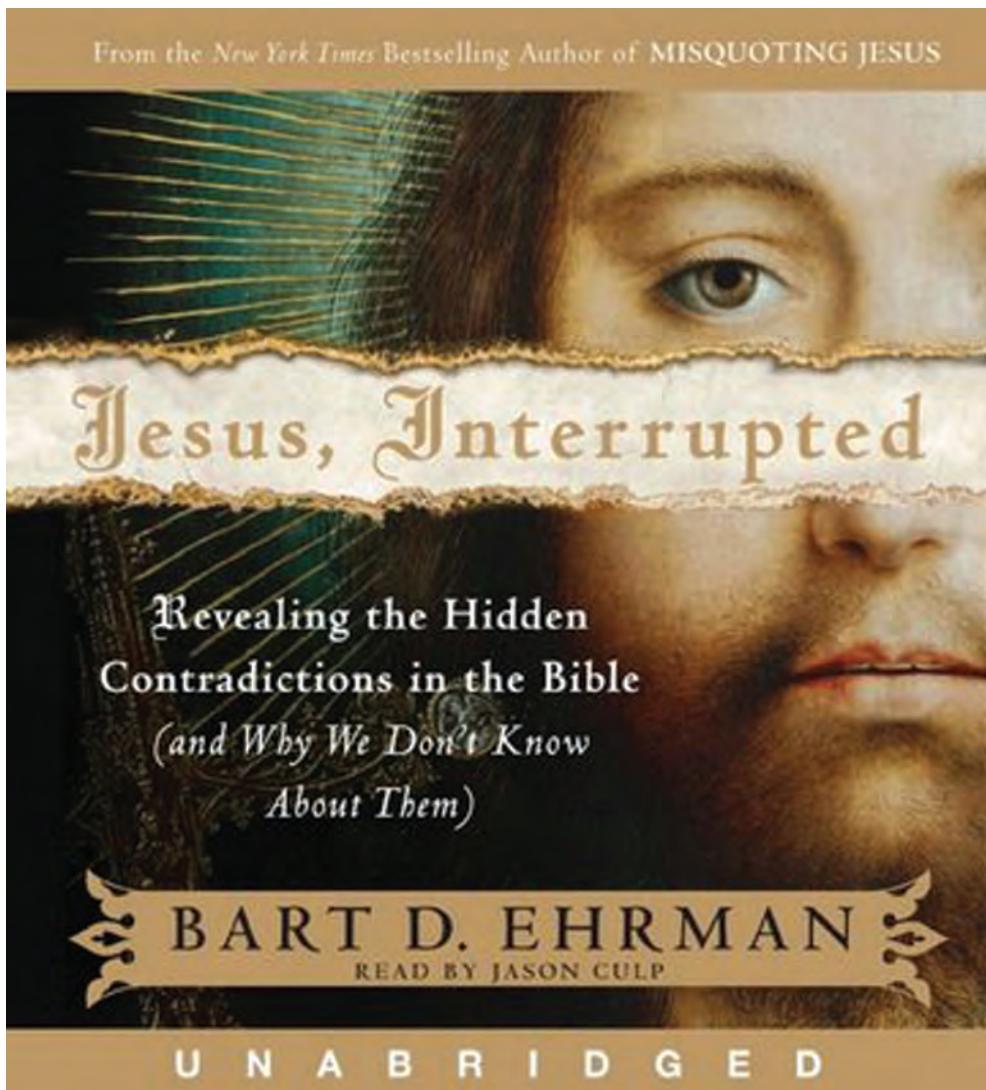
<sup>13</sup>Muslim (Riyadhu As-Salihin, p. 232-233)

<sup>14</sup>Poya, Abbas, The Relationship between Sharia and Rationality, <http://www.goethe.de/ges/phi/prj/ffs/the/srg/en4545593.htm>

<sup>15</sup>Ahmed, S. Akbar, "The Challenge of the Past: Empires and Dynasties " in Islam Today, I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 2001, p. 62

<sup>16</sup>Poya, Abbas, The Relationship between Sharia and Rationality, <http://www.goethe.de/ges/phi/prj/ffs/the/srg/en4545593.htm>

<sup>17</sup>Ibid



# Jesus, Interrupted:

**Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible  
(And Why We Don't Know About Them)**

Reviewed By Naseer A. Tahir, M.D.

**P**rof. Bart Ehrman, the author of *Jesus Interrupted*, has written more than 20 books.<sup>1</sup> In the preface of the book, the author describes his journey towards spirituality, the “born again” experience and passion for the knowledge about the Bible during high school leading him to the Moody Bible Institute, and the Theological Seminary at Princeton for Doctorate in New Testament studies.

Starting his studies as a Bible believing Christian, he finished with disillusionment and

changed ideology. He writes, “It became clear to me over a long period of time that my former views of the Bible as the inerrant revelation from God were flat-out wrong.” (P:xi) In the first chapter, the author describes the new discoveries about the Bible and massive scholarly endeavors taking place in the last 200 years, both due to archaeological discoveries and advances in knowledge of ancient Hebrew and Greek languages in which the books of scriptures were originally written. The author argues that most Christians read the Bible *devotionally*, the author has, however, taken the *historical-critical* approach. Having discovered several contradictions in the books of the Bible, Ehrman has concerns about the

authorship of the Bible and originality of its text.

The author notices that for most of those who read the Bible regularly the contradictions are hard to notice. They read the Bible “vertically” meaning sequentially, reading from beginning to end. The author suggests “horizontal” reading. This to him means reading the same story in different Gospels side by side, while making a comparison. Only then the contradictions become apparent.

## Who wrote the Bible?

The books called Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John were not written by Mathew, a disciple who was a tax collector; John, the “beloved” disciple; Mark, the secretary of Peter; or Luke, the travelling companion of Paul. Jesus<sup>as</sup> could read, but the author is not sure if he could write as well. The estimated literacy rate at that time and that part of the Roman Empire was 10% at best. It is fair to assume that most of the twelve disciples were illiterate, and unfit to be the authors of the Bible. An account in Acts (4:13) calls Peter and John to be unlettered. Jesus<sup>as</sup> and his followers were speakers of Aramaic, and certainly were not Greek. The authors of the Gospels must have been highly educated Greek speaking scholars. Although some have thought that the Bible was written in Aramaic, overwhelming consensus today, for lots of linguistic reasons, is that the Gospels were all written in Greek.

In his early student life the author confesses, like most American Christians, he believed in the Bible to be the Word of God, but his opinion changed as his knowledge of the New Testament increased. He asked the simple question: which Bible is the word of God? If King James version is the inspired word of God then what about the period before the English translation of King James Bible? Did Christians not have access to God’s Words? Why were not the original texts in Hebrew and Greek preserved? “Why would God have inspired the words of the Bible if he chose not to preserve those words for posterity?” (Page 182) The author had no answers for these questions.

The Proto-Orthodox Christians gained power with the Roman emperor Constantine converting to Christianity, this form of Christianity became the dominant form of Christianity. They claimed themselves to be right and declared others to be heretics.

A number of books were considered to be

sacred by one group or other: Gospels of Peter, Mary Magdalene, Judas, James and many others. The decision about which books should make up the canon was not made until the end of fourth century, some three hundred years after most of the books of the New Testament were written. The debates had gone on, and the twenty seven books of the New Testament emerged as the winners. With the domination of proto-orthodox group emerged the relationship of orthodoxy and heresy. Fourth century Orthodox Church father, Eusebius wrote *The Church History* in ten volumes. It tells us about the progress of the early Christianity to the time of Constantine. Eusebius promoted views that not only the orthodox Christians' views were right but were the views of Jesus and his apostles. All other views were views of heretics. This ultimately emerged as the Roman Christianity or Roman Catholic Christianity.

Contrary to all this, according to the author, Jesus<sup>as</sup> was a Jewish teacher who taught his disciples the Jewish Bible and it was the original Christian canon.

The first time the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are counted as the only books of the canon was in 367 CE by Athanasius, the famous bishop from Egypt who had participated in the Council of Nicaea. That council was called by Constantine to resolve important theological issues in the church.

With scholarly authority, Ehrman calls Christianity to be a Human Invention. He wrote: "My thesis here is that not only is the Bible a very human book, but that Christianity as it has developed and come down to us today is a very human religion" (Page: 227).

Moreover, the concept of a suffering Messiah is a totally Christian concept, and Jews had a different concept about the Messiah. The Christians quote Isaiah 53 and Psalms 22 which mention about suffering, but Jewish scholars differ with the Christians here, according to them there is no mention of suffering of a Messiah, rather these passages allude to another's suffering.

Jews were waiting for a Messiah who was to be a great, powerful and warrior-king in the line of David<sup>as</sup> and he will be son of God. He will crush enemies of God with his grandeur and rule with a rod of iron. The expectation is visible in Jewish

**With scholarly authority, Ehrman calls Christianity to be a Human Invention. He wrote: "My thesis here is that not only is the Bible a very human book, but that Christianity as it has developed and come down to us today is a very human religion"**

writings of the time (Psalm 2:1-9, and Psalms of Solomon 17:21-32).

Keeping this concept of Jews in mind the author wrote: "And who was Jesus? A virtually itinerant preacher from the hinterland of Galilee who got the wrong side of the law and was crucified ... Romans crushed him like a gnat. Calling Jesus the Messiah was for most Jews beyond laughable" (Page: 233).

And on page 236, the author wrote: "In reality, the idea that Jesus was the suffering Messiah was an invention of the early Christians. It is no wonder that the apostle Paul writing decades after Christians had come up with this idea, indicates that it is the greatest 'stumbling block' for Jews" (1 Corinthians 1:23). Their logic was altogether different from those of the Jews. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus suffered and died. Therefore, the Messiah had to suffer and die.

John is the only Gospel speaking of Jesus as divine, the standard Christian doctrine today. The other three Gospels do not call Jesus God and this was not the original belief of Jesus or his followers. Some of the speeches of the apostles in the book of Acts represent views held by Jesus' followers years before Luke wrote them down. In none of these speeches in Acts is Jesus spoken of as divine. In old Christian faith it is at the time of resurrec-

tion that Jesus is raised in status and, "Today, I have begotten you," reflects this evolution in belief. Later on it was reasoned that Jesus must have been Son of God all along.

For ancient Jews being the "son of God" did not mean being divine, and in Old Testament it can refer to different kinds of individuals.

The author's conclusion about Jesus' divinity is expressed as a Christian invention. He writes: "one of the most enduring theological creations of the early Christian church" (Page: 254).

### The doctrine of the Trinity

To reconcile the belief of divinity of Jesus with Christianity being monotheistic theology became a problem. If Christ is God and God is God then there are two Gods? The idea developed slowly and took many shapes and forms before emerging as the Doctrine of Trinity.

The Ebionites were adamant that there is only one God and Jesus was not God but the Messiah. Marcionites took the opposite view: Jesus was not human and he was God. Evidently they did not believe Jesus and God to be two different Gods. Various groups of Gnostics declared that Christ was divine, for them there were lots of divine beings and Christ was one of them.

All of these earlier approaches were eventually rejected as being heretical, but the problem remained: how to remain monotheistic and insist on the deity of Jesus. From the writings of Hippolytus and Tertullian, we know that from the earliest times the most popular belief was always the oneness of God, and Jesus and God were not considered as two different entities. Jesus was an incarnation of God. This is what is meant by “modalism.” The one God has different modes of existence. But Tertullian disagreed: it meant that when Jesus died it was the God the Father who himself died on the cross (“Patripassianism” which means “the Father suffers”). This led Tertullian and others to develop the idea that God the Father is a different person from God the son, yet God is one. For the author this concept is an enigma. How can it be? It is a mystery. Nonetheless, it became the Orthodox teaching.

### What about the third part of the Trinity?

Jesus in Gospel of John speaks of the Holy Spirit coming to earth as “another Advocate” (John 14:16). The Spirit is also God and there is a “triune” God. Sounds confusing? Here is the argument as presented by Tertullian, for many an impeccable argument:

“A father must have a son, in order to be father; so likewise a son, to be son, must

ing, the famous Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. The council voted unanimously that there are three persons in the God-head. They are distinct from each other. But each one is equally God. All three are eternal beings. This is the doctrine of Trinity.

Interestingly, there is no explicit mention of Trinity in the New Testament. The later scribes of the New Testament found absence of it disturbing and an explicit reference to Trinity was inserted into John (John 5:7-8). An amazing happening for the author: “within three hundred years Jesus went from being a Jewish apocalyptic prophet to being God himself, a member of Trinity. Early Christianity is nothing if not remarkable” (Page 260).

The author summarizes: “Christian religion represents a human invention—in terms of its historical and cultural significance, arguably the greatest invention in the history of Western civilization” (Page 268).

### My remarks about this book

Bart Ehrman is a man blessed with great intelligence and the fortitude to stand up for what he believes is Truth. Although his hard and long journey was to lead him to be “born again,” it resulted in the demise of his Christian

faith. I would encourage such a man to direct his eyes to the teachings of Islam, where he might discover the pure teachings of Jesus<sup>as</sup>. There are absolutely no discrepancies or contradictions in Islam. Not only in the Holy Qur'an but the entire universe is completely harmonious.

Who has created seven heavens in harmony? No incongruity canst thou see in the **creation** of the Gracious God. Then look again: Seest thou any flaw? (Al Qur'an 64:7)

On page 16 of the book the author writes: “If God wanted us to have his words, why didn't he preserve his words?” Here is the confession that the

criterion to judge if a book is from divine is that it should be preserved in its originality.

Indeed, We Ourself have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian. (Al Qur'an 15:10)

It is a well established fact, and both Muslims and non-Muslims scholars agree, that the Holy Qur'an exists in its originality, without additions or subtractions. No human hands have interfered with it, it is well preserved from its beginning.

There is only one way to read the Holy Qur'an. One does not need the invention of “horizontal” or “vertical” readings. I assure the author that it will withstand both “devotional” as well as “historical-critical” reading equally.

The question of “suffering” which the author counts as the main cause for his departure from his faith and the change of his views are well explained in Islamic theology. I invite him to read the chapter on this topic, in the book *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth*.<sup>2</sup>

If the author is really looking for truth—he certainly started out to be, the Holy Qur'an has stated this everlasting principle:

And as for those who strive in Our path — We will surely guide them in Our ways. And verily Allah is with those who do good. (Holy Qur'an 29:70)

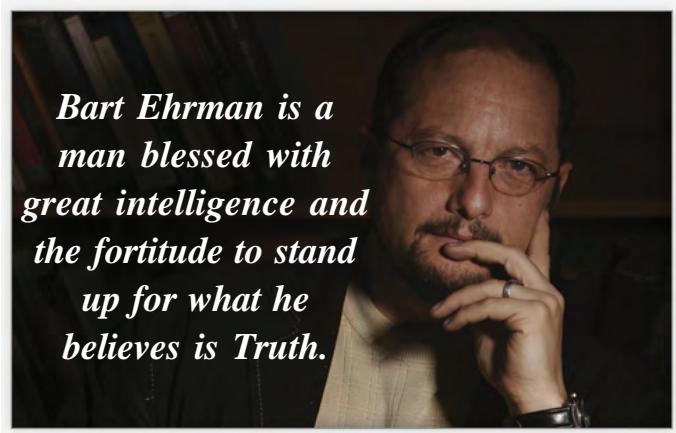
With his lifetime of study, expanding over decades, Bart Ehrman has discovered only part of the truth: ‘the present Bible is not the literal word of God.’ To complete his journey and reach the destination, I invite him to study the Qur'an. He will find the true and the original teachings of the Bible in the Holy Qur'an.♦

**Naseer A Tahir, MD** is an Anesthesiologist and Pain Management Specialist in Rochester, NY. He is President of the local chapter of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (And Why We Don't Know About Them) by Bart D. Ehrman. HarperOne, 2010. This is the edition reviewed here.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part\\_2\\_section\\_6.html](http://www.alislam.org/library/books/revelation/part_2_section_6.html)



**Bart Ehrman is a man blessed with great intelligence and the fortitude to stand up for what he believes is Truth.**

have father. It is, however, one thing to have, and another thing to be. For instance, in order to be a husband, I must have a wife; I can never myself be my own wife” (*Against Praxeas*, 10).

When the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, he called a meet-

## Ahmadis: The lightning rod that attracts the most hatred in the Islamic world

By DAWN.COM On October 28, 2011

A month after ten Ahmadi students were expelled from two schools in the village of Dharinwala, in Faisalabad district, all have been put back to school, not in there old ones, but in two schools in Hafizabad, thanks to Khalil Ahmad, father and grandfather of four students who were among those expelled.

"I managed to get all of them enrolled in two schools in the nearby city of Hafizabad," he said talking to Dawn.com over phone from his village.

But it's not been easy. Most parents of the expelled children are too poor, so Ahmed volunteered to pay for their admissions, their books and stationery. And that is not all. He, with the help of his two sons, makes sure they drop and pick all of them on a motorbike, doing turns.

In one school, the principal knows he has given admission to Ahmadi students but the educator believes faith should not come in the way of those seeking education. "In the other the principal has not been told," Ahmed revealed.

Sadly, all during this episode, the government has remained a quiet bystander, as always.

It is not the first time that students have been expelled from an educational institution in Punjab because of their religious affiliations, remarked Bushra Gohar, a parliamentarian belonging to the secular Awami National Party. According to Gohar, her party members had condemned the expulsion of students belonging to the Ahmadiyya community each time on the floor of the house. "However, a protest or condemnation from the parties leading in the Punjab has not been forthcoming," she said.

For far too long, Pakistani students belonging to this minority community have been facing various forms of discrimination based on their faith.

"This tidal wave against the Ahmadiyya education shows no sign of ebbing," Saleemuddin, the spokesperson of the Ahmadiyya Jammat, told Dawn.com.

He said after 1984, when the government

Medical College, in Faisalabad, back in 2008, can never forget the stressful event and how "night after night, for over a month" he kept stressing over the events that turned his settled student life all topsy-turvy.

"I knew it happened to others, so was not completely caught unawares," Hasan acknowledged. He is at present completing his house job in Lahore, keeping an "ultra busy schedule".

Eventually all were reinstated in some college or another. "After months of waiting, just before exam, my friend was sent to Bahawalpur while I went off to a distant place of Rahimyar Khan in a college of lower merit," narrated Hasan.

After a arduous effort, he was finally allowed to appear in exams from Lahore and then got admitted to Allama Iqbal Medical College, in Lahore.

"To be in a state of flux was the worst part of this episode specially since exams were approaching and I didn't know which place I was to appear from," said Hasan.

He expressed that till the identity of an Ahmadi remains undisclosed "he remains safe".

But that is sadly not the case if you are living in Pakistan. People are culturally nosy and want to know your cast and sect. "Eventually they end up finding that you are an Ahmadi. Once they know, you can feel a change of attitude and it just takes a mischief maker to exploit others' feelings against you," said Hasan.

Till Hina Akram's faith remained unknown to her teacher in Faisalabad's National Textile University, she was considered a star student. But after it became known she belonged to the Ahmadiyya community, she faced so much



promulgated the anti Ahmadiyya ordinance, both the government and the clerics have been trying their utmost to punish them in various ways.

Ahmadi lecturers were posted away to distant locations and some were not allowed to teach. Ahmadi principals and headmasters were replaced. Ahmadi students were deprived admission in professional colleges. They were refused accommodation in attached hostels. They suffered attacks by extremist elements on campuses."

According to the Asian Human Rights Commission, the Islami Jamiat Talaba, the student wing of the Islami Jamiat has been tasked to cleanse the educational institutions, including universities and professional colleges of Ahmadi students.

Hasan Ahmed, who was among the 23 students who were expelled from Punjab

faith-based harassment that she had to quit studies.

"I was told to convert to Islam," said Hina, who was studying in the sixth semester of her BSc.

"I was handed some anti-Ahmadiyya literature to read, offered a refuge in Muslim home. But when she told the teacher she was an Ahmadi by choice he called her an infidel and warned her of severe consequences.

"You will face such a fire of animosity in the campus that not even the vice chancellor will be able to help you," he threatened her.

True to his word, a hate campaign was initiated and a social boycott began. Out of college, she is desperately trying to go abroad. Her fate remains in balance.

But it's not just the education aspect where the anti-Ahmadiyya lobby is hitting, said Saleemuddin. Since 1984, some 208 faith-based killings have taken place. The persecution against the community has surged following the May 28, 2010 massacre of 94 members of the community in Lahore.

After the four million Ahmadis were officially declared non-Muslims in 1984 by the state, they cannot call themselves Muslims or go to mosques. They cannot be overheard praising Prophet Mohammad. To add insult to injury, every Pakistani who claims to be a Muslim and owns a passport has declared that he or she considers them to be non-Muslims and their leader an imposter prophet.

Pakistani Ahmadis today live in constant fear and humiliation. So much so, the hatred has permeated into each and every slice of society and the oppressors have become more vocal and aggressive.

"The extremist elements are getting more and more powerful because of Saudi-US influence and the government's policy of appeasement," said I.A. Rehman, General Secretary Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.

"The Ahmadis are already the worst persecuted minority in our country – and things for them appear to be growing worse as hatred and intolerance spread," Kamila Hyat, a journalist and a rights activist echoed the same sentiments. "The lack of enforcement of laws to prevent the preaching of hatred adds to the problem," she added.

Saleemuddin said by allowing the

extremist clerics to hold anti-Ahmadiyya rallies and conferences, the government is adding fuel to this venom. "People are openly instigated to kill us in the name of Islam," he said.

"Violence and the advance of bigotry, prejudice and hate against minorities have never really been met with the resolve needed to remove impunity from the social equation in Pakistan," Sherry Rehman, a legislator belonging to the ruling Pakistan People's Party, agreed.

Instead, she told Dawn.com what is seen is an "expansion in the space for religious and sectarian apartheid, which has led now to heinous acts of brutality and exclusion of many, particularly Ahmadis."

She warned: "This is a dangerous trend that conflates national identity with religion."

Perhaps that is one reason why Pervez Hoodbhoy expresses: "Today, when religion has become so central in matters of the state, they [Ahmadis] do not stand a chance in Pakistan of getting rights, respect, and dignity. The overdose of religion given to young Pakistanis in their schools and homes means that nothing matters more than which religion and sect you belong to. Ahmadis are the lightning rod that attracts more hatred than any other sect."

For its part rights groups like the Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) say they have "repeatedly" raised the issue of "state tolerated persecution".

"We are urging authorities to intervene in each case," said Rehman. "But the situation is getting worse day by day."

Terming it "abhorrent and self defeating" when society allows "for the dehumanization of Ahmadis or Christians or the Shia for that matter, it is effectively cannibalizing itself," said Ali Dayan Hasan, Pakistan director of HRW.

"The federal government expresses regret at incidents but has made clear its unwillingness to repeal or amend discriminatory laws," said HRW spokesperson.

Given the current intolerance, the fate of the new generation of Pakistani Ahmadis looks "quite bleak" said Rehman.

Even Hoodbhoy said: "For years, Ahmadis, Hindus, and Christians have been desperately seeking to flee Pakistan. They would be foolish to want to stay," said Hoodbhoy.

This fails to dampen young Hasan's spirits. He thinks the future looks "brighter

than ever before".

"Even if the situation is made worse in Pakistan, this does not mean the future is not bright. It's a matter of time before we start getting equal rights in this country."

Often when they get together, the young Ahmadis discuss the "bitter realities" they have to face as Pakistanis.

"But we don't want to leave our country at the juncture that it is at," said a patriotic Hasan. This is because the contribution of the Ahmadi community towards building of Pakistan has been immense," he said with conviction.

He said recently their leader urged all Ahmadis of the world to "fast once a week and pray" especially for the prosperity of Pakistan."◆

*Zofeen T. Ebrahim is a freelance journalist.*

**New York Times**  
**The Opinion Pages**  
*Published: November 6, 2011*  
**Cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad**

As a Muslim-American belonging to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, I condemn the firebombing in Paris last week of Charlie Hebdo, a French satirical weekly newspaper. Although no one has claimed responsibility for the attack, it was likely a reaction to a scathing cartoon of the Prophet Muhammad that the magazine planned to publish.

In his lifetime, the Prophet strictly prohibited anyone from harming those who mocked him. Instead, he prayed for them and returned insult with kindness, so much so that some of their children actually decided to join the Prophet. If he were the guest editor for Charlie Hebdo, as fictitiously suggested, the Prophet would have unequivocally decried the bombing but also would have called on citizens of all faiths to make merry by working together, not by making a jest of one another's saints.

Sohail Z. Husain, Pittsburgh

# News, Views and Reviews

## Christians, Muslims can co-exist with mutual respect

November 13, 2011

The Marietta Daily Journal

**T**he prevailing winds since 9/11 have been suspicion and distrust towards all Muslims, but according to William Watson, ‘Hate and mistrust are the children of blindness.’

I knew an Irish doctor who saved a man’s life. Then he noticed, “I hate Irish” tattooed on his arm. According to the thinking of MDJ guest columnist Pete Borden (“Acceptance is earned, not an entitlement,” Nov. 1) who was right? The man who hated the Irish? Or, the doctor who owed it to the world to prove that Irish are good just because some Irish belonged to the IRA?

While I understand that some Christians feel the “proper venue” for religion is at church on Sunday, Islam is a 24/7 religion. That is why we pray five times a day. If we wash five times a day, won’t we get cleaner?

One of the Cobb board members spoke at Sprayberry high school last year. He said, “First you choose the habit, and then the habit chooses you.”

I choose to follow the Quranic teaching not to display my beauty. The scarf enables us to be recognized and although some view the coat as a hindrance, its purpose is to prevent difficulties. I didn’t get hired by some people who were distrustful of what the hijab represents, but I did get hired by Cobb County because they valued my education.

In the past, marriages were arranged, but when I grew up, people dated. Now people talk of “hooking up.” Can there be any



**A Catholic/Muslim Interfaith Dialogue.** An Ahmadiyya Muslim takes time to help inform and educate at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Kenosha, WI.

doubt that the supposed “sexual revolution” has done anything but damage the status of women?

While I believe Mr. Borden is right that I cannot expect any “warm and fuzzy feeling,” when I first meet people, after a time, they usually thaw out and warm up. Perhaps dialogues like this one will help people understand our community better.

You may well ask, “Where are the moderate Muslims?” The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community represents the middle way.

Asking someone who was at 9/11 if they approve of terrorist attacks is a lot like asking someone who has been in an earthquake if they like earthquakes. The answer is no. I am not for terrorism.

During September, our community collected 11,000 units of blood to honor the victims of 9/11. In Georgia, we collected one

tenth of the total for America. It’s not because we have a huge congregation. We don’t. But we are dedicated to serving America in a positive way. I volunteered at Kennesaw, Douglasville and at the University of Georgia. I discovered blood donors are lovely people and this small 10 percent of our population supplies all of America with blood. It couldn’t be for the cookies, I swear.

I expect that you don’t know about the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Let me explain that we were founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India in 1889. He claimed to be the Promised Messiah who denounced all acts of violence. Ahmadis were the first Muslims in America in 1920, so we have a history of nonviolence. Our motto is: Love for All, Hatred for None.

I cannot assimilate, if assimilation means taking off my hijab, because that is part of my religion. But I think Christians and Muslims can coexist better with mutual respect. Emerson once said: “Men are respectable only as they respect.” Could he be wrong?

**Allison Knight-Khan**  
**Powder Springs**

The protesters have occupied the Wall Street for about a couple of months. It is an unprecedented demonstration against the bankers and the stock market on Wall Street which represent the core of United States economy. I am not in favor of demonstrations of any kind. They are justified through the arguments of non-violence, peaceful retaliation and freedom of expression. Even when the intentions are peaceful, they rarely stay peaceful and bring about several problems for the general public. The level of noise for the neighboring residents, increased burden on the police force and garbage accumulation are just a few items for starters. The public ends up paying all these costs in one way or another. There are commandments about caring for your neighbor, cleanliness and obeying the authority; but they become irrelevant in a demonstration.

# The Wall Street Casino



In New York City, the Occupy Wall Street headquarters evicted from Zuccotti Park by police.

*The Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>  
said that he was given  
commandments about caring for  
the neighbor so much that he  
thought one day he would get the  
commandment making the  
neighbor an heir. He also said that  
cleanliness is half of the faith. The  
Holy Qur'an has clearly stated  
that you must obey the authority  
and the law of the land.*

The Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> said that he was given commandments about caring for the neighbor so much that he thought one day he would get the commandment making the neighbor an heir. He also said that cleanliness is half of the faith. The Holy Qur'an has clearly stated that you must obey the authority and the law of the land.

I must admit though, that when a public demonstration continues and has a certain sustained power, we must acknowledge a problem that demands resolution. It is also an indication that our legal and civil system has failed to address the concerns of its citizens. It can be assumed that there are many more people who have the same feelings about these issues as the demonstrators. Everyone does not have the strength to stand on the streets with posters, knowing that things could get out of hand and they could be arrested. Standing amidst piles of garbage is another deterrent.

I don't claim to be a Wall Street guru of any kind, but I started to think about its issues that the demonstrators have set out to fix.

The stock market was intended to raise capital for businesses, particularly corporations. People bought shares in companies in hopes their earnings would grow to increase the value of their shares over time. Today, investors buy shares to sell them for a profit on a short term basis, even overnight and intraday. The thought process is not whether a company is a viable business or not, but how effectively a marketing campaign could stir up investor perception. The buying or selling decision is made based on what the other investor would value the shares tomorrow or in the next week or next month. Manipulation of values driven by special interest groups (e.g., the oil industry) with massive monetary

muscle used to influence decision makers and market perception, that needs to be controlled, is all related to the short term investment thinking. The speculative frenzy is as close to a gambling casino as you are going to get.

The house must win in a casino or they would not stay in business for long. The stock brokers must win in order to stay in business. Whether the stock goes up or down when a sale takes place, they must get their commissions. Whether you are buying or selling, the stock broker must get their commissions. It is in the best interest of the stock brokers to have a high volume of transactions so they want the investors to keep buying or selling. As long as the machines on the casino floor keep ringing, the house is happy.

How can we fix this huge house of transactions? I have some ideas but I know they are not going to be accepted by the Congress and especially by the stock brokers. How about if we make a law that stock cannot be sold for at least three years after the day it is bought? That would assure that the investor is buying the shares because he truly believes that the business entity is a viable business and will be around for a long time and will bring good returns in at least three years. Their decision would not be based on how they can make a killing by other investors trying to buy the same shares in a few days because everyone else is buying them. The businesses would know that they would have to have a viable business plan to convince the investors for long term investing. Investor hype would not be required when introducing a new corporation.

We could enforce this through the tax system as we normally do to change the behavior of taxpayers. If someone sells the stock before three years, the

loss cannot be deducted and the gain would be taxed at eighty percent tax rate. When the stock is held and sold after three years, there would be a capital gain tax of only five percent.

As I stated above, I know neither Congress nor the Wall Street gurus would be in its favor. I think it can still work though. Maybe I can convince a few of my investor friends to work on this plan of investing, for the long term. Then they could convince a few of their investor friends to do the same. Maybe it will catch on and Wall Street would become a place for raising capital for viable businesses poised for long term growth. It will save a lot of agony for a lot of people participating in demonstrations.

Wall Street is too big and there is so much money involved that there is no simple solution and I certainly don't claim to have the solutions. If nothing else, it is food for thought for the serious minded people to use it as a basis for further discussion. My proposal is not a comprehensive solution to all the ills of Wall Street, but it could be a good first baby step. Or we can continue to use Wall Street as a super-sized casino and demonstrate on the streets and pile up the garbage.

Since I am sure about the fate of my proposal, I know the garbage hauling business is here to stay and has tremendous long term future growth possibilities. I think I should buy stock of the garbage hauling companies, for long term investment of course. As long as Wall Street keeps operating the way it is, the stock has got to grow along with the garbage.

Some deals are just too good to pass up.♦

***Falahud Din Shams***

Happy Holidays



Happy New Year

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The Muslim Sunrise is published by the  
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA  
2S 510 Rte. 53 Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

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